

Rolling Stone

WOODSTOCK '99
Alanis, Aerosmith,
Jewel, Korn & Rage

"Hi.
My name
is Slim
Shady."

**LOW-
DOWN
AND
DIRTY
WHITE
BOY
RAP**

**EMINEM'S
TWISTED
LIFE
STORY**

Bad Blood
**MANSON &
HOLE TOUR
DOA**

Bono, Billy,
Bruce & Eric
**HALL OF
FAME'S
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Exclusive
Preview
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World of
**INTERNET
DRIFTERS**

EMINEM BLOWS UP

IN THREE SHORT MONTHS, twenty-four-year-old Marshall Bruce Mathers III has gone from white trash to white hot.

The Michigan rapper, who calls himself Eminem — and whose debut, *The Slim Shady LP*, sold 480,000 copies in its first two weeks — was a \$5.50-an-hour cook in a Detroit grill before his obscenity-strewn, gleefully violent, spastic, hilarious and demented rhymes landed him in the studio with rap honcho Dr. Dre.

The blue-eyed MC is dealing with the instant fame and simultaneous criticism well enough — much better, actually, than he is dealing with the fifth of Bacardi he downed an hour ago.

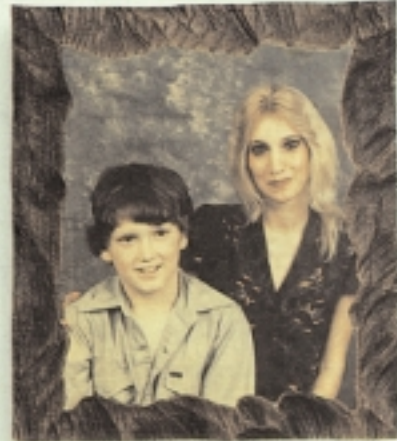
On a chilly Friday night in New York, he emerges bleary-eyed from the bathroom in his manager's office. "I just threw up everything I had," he says in his slow-roll drawl, which is a bit slower at the moment. "All I ate today was that slice of pizza. Feel good now, though."

His manager exhales slowly in relief. Eminem has three club gigs tonight, and the first one starts in less than an hour. The crew (nine, including DJ Stretch Armstrong and Dennis the security guard) ambles toward the elevator. Downstairs awaits Eminem's partner in rap, Royce the 5'9", who looks to be about that and has seven people of his own in tow. Em hops into a giant white limo as fellow honky Armstrong cops a rhyme from

BY ANTHONY BOZZA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID LACHAPPELLE





A BOY AND HIS MOTHER. FROM LEFT: MARSHALL, AGE TWO, AND DEBBIE, NINETEEN; MARSHALL AT FOUR; AT TWELVE.

"I WAS WALKING HOME from my boy's house. One dude came up, hit me in the face and knocked me down. Then he pulled out a gun. I ran right out of my shoes, dog."

Eric Clapton's Cream. "In the white room, with white people and white rappers," he bellows. A minute later there's a knock on the window and one of Royce's posse gives Em the first of the three hits of ecstasy he will consume over the course of the night. Down it goes in a swallow of ginger ale as the car zooms off toward Staten Island.

Out on New Dorp Lane, there is a crowd of kids, a mere fraction of the number already inside the Lane Theater. The all-ages show is packed, and Eminem is the evening's main course. The mob is being controlled by the club's security, but when the rapper moves inside, the burly dudes are no match for the crush of shouting teens. "You look good!" one girl shouts. "Oh, my God, he looks better in person," shrieks another. Everywhere, kids have tiny glow sticks in their mouths, which, here in the dark, look like neon braces. At the back of the club, up a ladder, is the minute dressing room, where the very proud owner of the club is waiting. "Hey, nice to meet ya," he says. "My daughter told me to get Eminem, so I got Eminem. It's her fourteenth birthday. Hey, say hi to her and her friends."

Eminem soon grabs four bottles of water and heads to the stage. He owns this audience. These predominantly white kids know every word, every nuance, and can't get enough. If *Slim Shady's* rhymes about sex with underage girls ("Yo, look at her bush, does it got hair?/Fuck this bitch right here on the spot bare/Till she passes out and she forgot how she got there") bother them any, they don't show it. In fact, the filthier the material, the louder the cheers.

On *The Slim Shady LP*, Eminem says, "God sent me to piss the world off." Interscope Records is Em's label - a perfect fit for a company that's home to controversial artists like the late Tupac Shakur and Marilyn Manson. Eminem has been condemned as a misogynist, a nihilist and an advocate of domestic violence, principally in an editorial by *Billboard* editor in chief Timothy White, who attacked *The Slim Shady LP* as "making money by exploiting the world's misery." "My album isn't for younger kids to hear," Emi-

Assistant editor ANTHONY BOZZA prowled the streets of New York with Method Man for *RS 801*.

nem says. "It has an advisory sticker, and you must be eighteen to get it. That doesn't mean younger kids won't get it, but I'm not responsible for every kid out there. I'm not a role model, and I don't claim to be." On the album, his alias, Slim Shady, hangs himself from a tree by his penis, dumps the girlfriend he's murdered in a lake with the help of their baby daughter, takes every drug at once, rips "Pamela Lee's tits off" and heads out into the night yelling, "To all the people I've offended, yeah, fuck you, too!"

This hard-core attitude has won him acceptance not just from teenagers taken with his video but also from the hip-hop community. Later on, at Manhattan's Sound Factory, Em will win over a mostly black audience. He will be greeted with indifferent stares that will melt into smiles, then rump-shaking abandon by the end of his four-song set. The rapper will top off the evening - well, the morning by that point - entertaining doelike women and spiky-haired guys at the trendy mecca called Life, where a table of ten model types will be evicted so that Em and his friends may kick back.

Right about now, though, a roomful of Staten Islanders is going berserk. In the silence between songs, a young girl in the front row who's wearing a white baby T screams, "I love you!" Eminem walks over. "I love you, too," he says and bends down to give her a hug. Big mistake. The girl lays a kiss on his lips and sets off the girl next to her, who tears Eminem's head away and kisses him full on the mouth. "Oh, shit," he laughs. "I'm going to jail tonight!" He launches into "Scary Movies," the B side to the independently released "Bad Meets Evil" single, and the audience raps right along. When he sits at the front of the stage, his pants are pulled at and his crotch is grabbed. "I touched his dick!" one girl boasts to her friend.

Eminem is already a bona fide star, the type not likely to play a club this small again. The only reason he is here at all is that this date was booked before his debut album entered the charts at Number Two. The demand for the record at stores around the country was so great that Interscope shipped more than 1 million copies - extraordinarily rare for a first record. Eminem has similarly conquered MTV: Since the January release of the wise-ass video for "My Name Is," he has

been on the network more than Carson Daly. And now, three months later, despite the fact that he's never headlined for any length of time, the rapper has been offered slots on every summer tour except CSNY's.

Eminem empties a water bottle on the heads of the audience, drops his pants, waves his middle finger around, and the show is over. He is whisked into a waiting car through a back alley. The police have been called to keep things orderly as the limo moves off into the night. At the curb, a girl who looks no more than fourteen shouts, "I want to fuck you," tugging suggestively at the top of her shirt and revealing her pierced tongue. "I want to fuck you, too," Eminem says aloud to himself. "But I won't."

EMINEM IS A WHITE BOY IN A BLACK MEDIUM. He has been booed on the mike and told repeatedly by black hip-hoppers that he should stop rapping and go into rock & roll. "It's some very awkward shit," says Em's mentor, Dr. Dre, about the race card. "It's like seeing a black guy doing country & western, know what I'm saying?" Even Dre's judgment was suspect when he signed Em to his Interscope imprint, *Aftermath*. "I got a couple of questions from people around me," he says. "You know, 'He's got blue eyes, he's a white kid.' But I don't give a fuck if you're purple: If you can kick it, I'm working with you." Indeed, talent will overcome, and Em is having the last laugh. "A lot of the people who disrespected me are coming out of the woodwork now for collaborations," he says. "But I like doing my own shit. If there were too many other voices, the stories wouldn't go right." True enough - slipping a verse into a song about a New Wave blonde nurse's aide who overdoses on mushrooms and relieves her father's sexual abuse, all over a party-hearty tempo, isn't exactly the same as freestyling on the "Money, Cash, Hoes" remix.

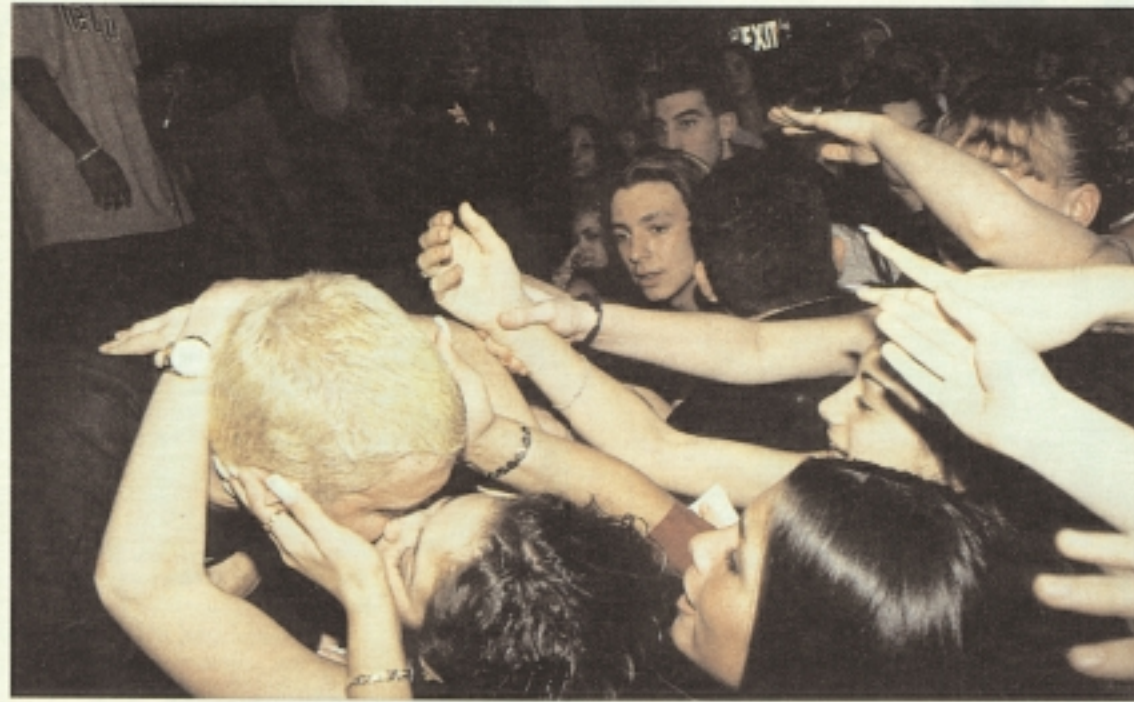
For anyone expecting more of the naughty, pop-culture-obsessed blond kid in the clean version of "My Name Is," proffered on MTV, *The Slim Shady LP* is some bad-trip nether world. But that world is exactly why the hip-hop underground loves Em. His off-the-beat flow, way-off-the-beat lyrics and loony-tunes presentation place him in a class by himself. Em isn't trying to be Jay-Z, DMX or 2Pac; he's trying to be the Roadrunner, turning his enemies' anvils back on themselves with split-second trickery. He's also probably the only MC in 1999 who boasts low self-esteem. His rhymes are jaw-droppingly perverse, bespeaking a minimum-wage life devoid of hope, flushed with rage and weaned on sci-fi and slasher flicks.

And in the midst of the splatter is Marshall Mathers. Songs like "As the World Turns," in which Shady "fucks a divorced slut" to death with his "go-go gadget dick," are adolescent fantasies that indicate how Em spells revenge. But songs like "If I Had" and "Rock Bottom" are where the cartoons fade away, the bravado drops and the frustrated kid of his not-too-distant past appears, fed up with life, dead-end jobs and the poverty that has made him "mad enough to scream but sad enough to tear."

"I couldn't even get into a motherfucking club just being Eminem, before the video," Mathers says, walking through Newark Airport the day after his New York club shows. "Last night they had people clearing tables for me. It's fucking bananas. Scary shit, too, 'cause you can fall just as quick as you went to the top." He is a smallish guy who walks with a subdued swagger. Em is like a class clown with a lot on his mind: When he's on, nothing escapes the cross hairs of his snottiness, but when he's off, no one is included in his thoughts. He keeps the world at bay

with humor and an ever-growing list of character voices, including a roguish Scotsman, a Middle Eastern cab driver and a sleazy lech. He slips into these voices constantly, even in the midst of heart-wrenching stories about his childhood. Today he is chipper and apparently no worse for wear after just two hours of sleep and no breakfast. He is bound for his hometown of Detroit for three days off before heading to Mexico to perform on MTV's *Spring Break '99*, then on to Chicago for more album promotion.

The rapper is no stranger to moving around. He and his mother shuffled between Missouri and Michigan, rarely staying in one house for more than a year or two, and finally settled down when Marshall was eleven. It was the start of a life full of enough screaming fights and sordid dramas that, at the tender age of twenty-four, Eminem is ready for his own *Behind the Music*. But what happened depends on whom you ask. To hear him tell it, his life up until now has been non-stop hard knocks, beatings from bullies and brawls



STATEN ISLAND TEENAGERS, PACKED INTO THE LANE THEATER, RUSH THE STAGE TO GIVE SLIM SHADY MAD LOVE.

with his pill-popping, lawsuit-happy mom. His mother, Debbie Mathers-Briggs, on the other hand, denies both of these characterizations, claiming that her unending love and financial support got Eminem through the dog days. It's a story that would make Jerry Springer salivate, but let's just stick to the facts: (1) Eminem has never met his father; (2) he spent his formative years living in a largely black lower-middle-class Detroit neighborhood; (3) he dropped out of high school in the ninth grade; (4) he and his baby's mother have been breaking up and making up for the past eight years; and (5) he loves their three-year-old daughter, Hailie Jade, more than anybody else in the world.

Eminem's parents were married, his mother says, when she was fifteen and his father was twenty-two. Marshall III was born two years later. His parents were in a band called Daddy Warbucks, playing Ramada Inns along the Dakota-Montana border. But their relationship went sour. The couple split up, and Debbie and her son lived with family members for a few years before settling on the east side of Detroit. Marshall's father moved to California. As a teen, the future Eminem sent his dad a few letters, all of which, his mother claims, came back "return to sender." "I heard he's trying to get in touch with me now," the rapper says.

"Fuck that motherfucker, man. Fuck him."

The single mother and her sons (Em's younger half-brother, Nathan, was born in 1986) were one of three white households on their block. "I'm colorblind - it wasn't an issue," Em's mom says. "But the younger people in the area gave us trouble. Marshall got jumped a lot." When he was sixteen, his ass was kicked fiercely. "I was walking home from my boy's house, through the Bel-Air Shopping Center," he recalls. "All these black dudes rode by in a car, flippin' me off. I flipped them off back, they drove away, and I didn't think nothin' of it." Evidently they parked the car. "One dude came up, hit me in the face and knocked me down. Then he pulled out a gun. I ran right out of my shoes, dog. I thought that's what they wanted." But they didn't - when Mathers returned the next day, his shoes were still stuck in the mud. "That's how I knew it was racial." Em was saved by a white guy who pulled over, took out a gun and drove him home. "He came in wearing just his socks and

Maurice Malone. "Everybody thought he'd be easy to beat, and they got smoked every time."

On Saturdays, the two friends went to open-mike contests at the Hip-Hop Shop, on West 7 Mile, ground zero for the Detroit scene. "As soon as I grabbed the mike, I'd get booed," Eminem recalls. "Once motherfuckers heard me rhyme, though, they'd shut up." With four other rappers, Em and Proof formed a crew called the Dirty Dozen before Em released his own album, *Infinite*, on a local label in 1996 - an effort devoid of Shady's whacked-out humor and pent-up rage. "It was right before my daughter was born, so having a future for her was all I talked about," he says. "It was way hip-hopped out, like Nas and AZ - that rhyme style that was real in at the time. I've always been a smartass comedian, and that's why it wasn't a good album."

Detroit DJs and radio folks seemed to agree, leaving *Infinite* well enough alone. "After that record, every rhyme I wrote got angrier and angrier," Eminem says. "A lot of it was because of the feedback I got. Motherfuckers was like, 'You're a white boy, what the fuck are you rapping for? Why don't you go into rock & roll?' All that type of shit started pissing me off." It didn't help that days before his daughter's first birthday, Eminem got fired from his cooking job at Gilbert's Lodge. "That was the worst time ever, dog," he says. "It was, like, five days before Christmas, which is Hailie's birthday. I had, like, forty dollars to get her something. I wrote 'Rock Bottom' right after that."

This downward spiral ended one day on the job when Em met Slim Shady. "Boom, the name hit me, and right away I thought of all these words to rhyme with it," he says. "So I wiped my ass, got up off the pot and, ah, went and called everybody I knew."

Shady became Em's vengeful gremlin, his knight in smarmy armor, an Inspector Gadget Incredible Hulk with a taste for a bit of the ultra-violence. It was high time for Em to write some of the wrongs in his life, and Slim Shady was just the cat to right them. At the top of the shit list was his grade-school nemesis, D'Angelo Bailey. Yes, the bully who gets it with a broomstick in "Brain Damage" was entirely real. "Motherfucker used to beat the shit out of me," Eminem says. "I was in fourth grade and he was in sixth. Everything in the song is true: One day he came in the bathroom, I was pissing, and he beat the shit out of me. Pissed all over myself. But that's not how I got really fucked up." During recess one winter, Em taunted a smallish friend of Bailey's. "D'Angelo Bailey - no one called him D'Angelo - came running from across the yard and hit me so hard into this snowbank that I blacked out." Em was sent home, his ear started bleeding, and he was taken to the hospital. "He had a cerebral hemorrhage and was in and out of consciousness for five days," his mother reports. "The doctors had given up on him, but I wouldn't give up on my son."

"I remember waking up and saying, 'I can spell elephant,'" Em recalls with a laugh. "D'Angelo Bailey - I'll never forget that kid."

Old D'Angelo won't forget you, either. "He was the one we used to pick on," says Bailey, now married with kids and living in Detroit. "There was a bunch of us that used to mess with him. You know, bully-type things. We was having fun. Sometimes he'd fight back - depended on what mood he'd be in." As for Eminem's recollection of the event that put him in the hospital, Bailey boasts, "Yeah, we flipped him right on his head at recess. When we didn't see him moving, we took off running. We lied and said he slipped on the ice. He was a wild kid, but back then we thought it was stupid. Hey, you have his phone number?"

In the spring of 1997, Eminem recorded the eight-

song *Slim Shady* EP – the demo that earned him his deal with Interscope. At the time, he was scrounging more than ever. He and his girlfriend, Kim, had been living with their baby in crack-infested neighborhoods. A stray bullet flying through the kitchen window and lodging in the wall while Kim was doing dishes wasn't the worst of it – they had been adopted by a crackhead. "The neighborhoods we lived in fucking sucked," Kim says. "I went through four TVs and five VCRs in two years." After cleaning out the first of those TVs and VCRs, plus a clock radio, the guy came back one night to make a sandwich. "He left the peanut butter, jelly – all the shit – out and didn't steal nothing," Em says. "Ain't this about a mother-fucking bitch. But then he came back again and took everything but the couches and beds. The pillows, clothes, silverware – everything. We were fuckin' fucked."

The young parents moved in with Em's mom for a while, which wasn't much better. "My mother did a lot of dope and shit – a lot of pills – so she had mood swings," Em says. "She'd go to bed cool, then wake up like, 'Motherfuckers, get out!'" Em's mom denies all of the above. "I've never done drugs," she says. "Marshall was raised in a drug- and alcohol-free environment." He moved in with friends, and Kim and the baby lived with her mother. "I didn't have a job that whole summer," Em recalls. "Then we got evicted, because my friends and me were paying rent to the guy on the lease, and he screwed us over." The night before he headed to the Rap Olympics, an annual nationwide MC battle in L.A., he came home to a locked door and an eviction notice. "I had to break in," he says. "I didn't have anywhere else to go. There was no heat, no water, no electricity. I slept on the floor, woke up, went to L.A. I was so pissed."

"Oh, my God," recalls Paul "Bunyan" Rosenberg, the beefy lawyer who manages Eminem. "There was this big black guy sitting next to me in the crowd at the Olympics. After the first round, he yells, 'Just give it to the white boy. It's over. Give it to the white boy.'"

They didn't, and Em was crushed. Not only could he have used the first-place prize, 500 bucks and a Rolex, but he wasn't used to taking second. "He really looked like he was going to cry," Rosenberg says, nodding thoughtfully. Well, Eminem lost the battle, but he won the war. A *Shady* EP given to a few Interscope staffers soon made it into the hands of co-head Jimmy Iovine. While Em was in L.A., Iovine and Dr. Dre took a listen. "In my entire career in the music industry," Dre says, "I have never found anything from a demo tape or a CD. When Jimmy played this, I said, 'Find him. Now.'"

Their first day in the studio, the pair knocked off "My Name Is" in about an hour, and as much as that song proved that Em is a brother from another planet,

they were just warming up. "I wrote two songs for the next album on ecstasy," Eminem says. "Shit about bouncing off walls, going straight through 'em, falling down twenty stories. Crazy. That's what we do when I'm in the studio with Dre." Dr. Dre on E? "Ha ha," Dre laughs. "He didn't say that! It's true, though. We get in there, get bugged out, stay in the studio for fuckin' two days. Then you're dead for three days. Then you wake up, pop the tape in, like, 'Let me see what I've done.'"



"I LIED TO KIM. I told her I was taking Hailie to Chuck E. Cheese. When she found out I used our daughter to write a song about killing her, she blew."

HHEY, TURN HERE," EMINEM SAYS TO THE driver of the big white van currently crunching through the snow-covered streets of east Detroit. "Stop. That was our house. My room was upstairs, in the back." The small two-story homes on the gridlike streets are identical – square patch of grass in the front, a short driveway on the side – differentiable only by their brick face or shingles. The van turns off 8 Mile, passing Em's high school, then the field next to the Bel-Air Shopping Center, where Em lost his boombox and nearly his life. Em is looking out of the window like a kid at Disneyland, pointing, recalling happy and heartbreaking

memories with equal excitement. "I like living in Detroit, making it my home," he says as the van heads toward the highway. "I like working out in L.A., but I wouldn't want to live there. My little girl is here."

The van pulls up to Gilbert's Lodge, the every-food family restaurant in suburban St. Clair Shores where Em worked on and off for three years. Inside there are antler chandeliers, a couple of appetite-suppressing mounted moose heads and a "trophy room," containing the jerseys of various local teams. The restaurant's staff scurries about, unaware of Em, who has virtually walked into the kitchen without being greeted. "Yo, Pete, whassup?" Em calls to a mustached man checking on orders. "Hi, Marshall," answers his former manager, Pete Karagiaouris. "Coming in to buy the place?" A few heads turn, and apron-clad folks say quick hellos.

"Hi, Marshall," says a forties-ish waitress with a sticky-sweet voice and a Midwestern accent. "You know, I watch MTV and I never see you."

"Oh, yeah?" he replies coolly. Em takes a table toward the back. After a very silent twenty minutes, he stops a passing waitress: "Can we get some beers here?" "Yeah, but I need to see your ID," she says.

"I don't have my wallet, but I used to work here – ask Pete. I'm over twenty-one." Less than twenty-four hours ago, in Staten Island, security guards had kept a frothing crowd from tearing Em to shreds while he earned five grand for rapping four songs. In his own hometown, in the place he spent forty to sixty hours a week for three years, he's a stranger, and one without silverware, water or a menu. Either Gilbert's issued a memo about keeping Em real or the staff is having trouble coming to terms with Marshall's success. "Why did that bitch have to say that?" he says about the MTV jab. "Fucking bitch. I never liked her." It's a theme he returns to for the rest of the night. Em's shot of Bacardi arrives; he slams it, gets another and goes off to talk to the Gilbert's former co-workers. "Man, everything can be going so right," Rosenberg says, sipping his beer. "But a comment like that will stick with him for days. This is his reality – he came from this, and after everything is over, this is the reality he has to go back to."

The manager heads over, offering to make Eminem a special garlic-chicken pizza. "He was a good worker," Karagiaouris recalls. "But he'd be in the back rapping all the orders, and sometimes I had to tell him to tone it down." Em demonstrates, freestyling the ingredients of most of the appetizers in his herky-jerky whine. "Music was always the most important thing to him," Karagiaouris says. "But I never knew if he was any good at it – I listen to Greek music."

"You know what, Paulie?" Em says, smiling mischievously. "I want to do a clothing line. [Cont. on 72]



EMINEM

[Cont. from 47] Fat Fuck Clothing, for the Big Pun in you. What do you think?"

It's getting late, and Em's daughter is waiting for him. He has four days here at home to spend with her and her mother.

The van winds back through Detroit, stopping at a modest home. Kim, a pretty blonde, hops in holding Hailie, a groggy but smiley blue-eyed beauty who immediately dives onto Em's lap and wraps her arms around his neck. The van whisks off, Hailie falls back to sleep, and Em tells Kim about the New York shows. Forty minutes later, the van turns into the trailer park — more of a village, really — that Em calls home. "After I got my record deal, my mother moved back to Kansas City," he says. "I took over the payments on her trailer, but I'm never here." Indeed, the eviction notice on the door is proof enough. "Don't worry, we took care of that one," Rosenberg says as Em rips it off and goes inside.

The double-wide mobile home houses Em's possessions, which, after all the robberies and the moving around, have been acquired in the last six months. An autographed glossy of Dre that reads, "Thanks for the support, asshole" (mirroring Shady's autograph in "My Name Is") is on a wall, as is the album art from the *Shady* EP. Above the TV are two shots of Em and Dre from the video shoot, along with pictures of Hailie. A small rack holds CDs by 2Pac, Mase, Babyface, Luther Vandross, Esthero and Snoop Dogg. A baby couch for Hailie sits in front of the TV. On a wall near the kitchen is a flyer titled "Commitments for Parents," which lists directives like "I will give my child space to grow, dream, succeed and sometimes fail."

Hailie settles down on the floor with a stuffed polar bear as Kim prepares her bed. The couple are happy to see each other tonight, but songs like "'97 Bonnie and Clyde" make it clear that times are not always this tranquil. Their relationship has been volatile — all the more so since their daughter's birth. At one point two years ago, when they were on the outs and dating other people, Kim, according to Eminem, made it difficult for him to see his daughter and even threatened to file a restraining order. Em wrote "Just the 2 of Us," on the *Shady* EP, to tell the tale of a father killing his baby's mother and cleaning up the mess with the help of his daughter: "Here, you wanna help Dada tie a rope around this rock?/Then we'll tie it to her footsie, then we'll roll her off the dock/Here we go, count of three. One, two, three, wee!/ There goes Mama, splashing in the water/ No more fighting with Dad, no more restraining order."

The original had a slightly different beat and a less monied production than "'97 Bonnie and Clyde," the version on the Interscope album, but on the *Shady LP*, Hailie chillingly plays herself (she is also on the album cover and liner notes). "I lied to Kim and told her I was taking Hailie to Chuck E. Cheese that day," Em recalls. "But I took her to the studio. When she found out I used our daughter to write a song about killing her, she fucking blew. We had just got back together for a couple of weeks.

Then I played her the song, and she bugged the fuck out."


Kim declines to comment on that song or any of the others about her, including a track slated for Em's next album called "Kim." The song is the prelude to "'97 Bonnie and Clyde," with Em acting out the screaming fight that ends in murder. Em has played it for her already and claims that now she is truly convinced that he is insane. "If I was her, I would have ran when I heard that shit," Dre says. "It's over the top — the whole song is him screaming. It's good, though. Kim gives him a concept."

Em's friend Proof has been around the couple from the beginning. "This is what I love about Em," he says. "One time we came home and Kim had thrown all his clothes on the lawn — which was, like, two pairs of pants and some gym shoes. So we stayed at my grandmother's, and Em's like, 'I'm leaving her; I'm never going back.' Next day, he's back with her. The love they got is so genuine, it's ridiculous. He gonna end up marrying her. But there's always gonna be conflict there."

Em says Hailie has heard his record and loves it, but he knows she's too young still to get much more than the beats. "When she gets old enough, I'm going to explain it to her," Em says. "I'll let her know that Mommy and Daddy weren't getting along at the time. None of it was to be taken literally." He shakes his head ruefully. "Although at the time, I wanted to fucking do it." Em is the first to admit he's got a bad temper, which he has harnessed into a career. "My thoughts are so fucking evil when I'm writing shit," he says. "If I'm mad at my girl, I'm gonna sit down and write the most misogynistic fucking rhyme in the world. It's not how I feel in general, it's how I feel at that moment. Like, say today, earlier, I might think something like, 'Coming through the airport sluggish, walking on crutches, hit a pregnant bitch in the stomach with luggage.'"

Slim Shady is Marshall Mathers' way of taking revenge on the world, and he's also a defense mechanism. On the one hand, a lot of Slim Shady's cartoonish fantasies are offensive; on the other, they're better than Mathers re-creating the kind of abuse the world heaped upon him while growing up. "I dealt with a lot of shit coming up, a lot of shit," he says. "When it's like that, you learn to live day to day. When all this happened, I took a deep breath, just like, 'I did it.' " The magnitude of what he's done in such a short time doesn't seem to have sunk in. Em hasn't sipped the bubbly or smelled the roses — and if he allots time for that in the next few months, it will have to be at the drive-through. As for the future, he won't even wager a guess.

"If he remains the same person that walked into the studio with me that first day, he will be fucking larger than Michael Jackson," says a confident Dre. "There are a lot of ifs and buts, but my man, he's dope and very humble." As Em closes the door, with Hailie's blanket in his hands, he looks humble, a little tired and pretty happy. For now. ◻

 Listen to the story behind Eminem's rise from neighborhood punching bag to hip-hop's blue-eyed wonder at rollingstone.com and on AOL.