



The Police

Outlandos d'Amour

11/1978

A&M

In Lust with *Outlandos d'Amour*

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It was 1983, my sophomore year, and the bus ride to and from school was the best part of my day. My classes were boring, my friends were boring and my hometown of Canonsburg, Pa was living *death*.

All I wanted was to be free.

Free to do what exactly remained to be seen. Mostly, I wanted to be bad. I felt bad -- or something like it -- deep in my far insides. Push, pull, rebel, break -- I was snarling like a dog straining its' chain. My outside didn't act like a junkyard dog but it was how I felt. How best to embody this ache? Get to know the cool seniors and devise a plan to somehow become like them -- right?

They rarely spoke to me, of course, but I felt rebellious just standing next to them. These were those closest to escaping. I just wanted to be in their gravitational field in case I got lucky enough to float out into space with someone.

I idolized the only cool senior girl at the bus stop; I stood near her as often as I could. Carmen smoked, drove a red Ford Pinto and went into Pittsburgh to talk to college boys outside the Electric Banana. She, like the rest, treated me like the sad, little senior groupie I was.

One morning we were standing on the corner waiting for the bus when Carmen announced to the others in the senior universe that she didn't feel like taking the biology test; she was skipping for the day.

Who was in?

When no one immediately answered I said, "I'll go!" There was a snicker in the crowd and I held my breath. She looked at me with indifference but said, "Okay, wait here." Five minutes later she pulled around to the bus stop and I climbed into her Pinto.

Finally, I get to be a genuine bad kid.

When I opened the door to slide inside I was met with an explosion. The Kenwood speakers buzzed and thumped with a song I didn't know in my head but I understood immediately in my heart.

I'd rob a bank

Maybe steal a plane

You took me over

Think I'm goin' insane

"What is this?" I yelled.

Carmen glared at me, obviously disgusted at my naiveté. "The Police," she said. "It's the best Police album."

Sting? Really?

It was 1983 and everyone was listening to *Synchronicity* but this did not sound like "Wrapped Around Your Finger" or "King of Pain". His snarl and growl gave me the same twinge, in the same place, as when I watched the boys play basketball after school.

What can I do? All I want is to get next to you.

All I want is to get next to you.

Sting sounded pissed-off and horny. I was in love.

This music blew my sophomore mind. It was dark but funky. Rockin' but new wavy. And reggae? What was that? "There's a Hole" introduced me to a new beat I never imagined existed.

There's a hole

In my life

Be a happy man

I try the best I can

Or maybe I'm just looking

For too much

There's something missing from my life

I know, Sting, I know. I was forever disappointed, too. I expected so much out of high school: intellectual challenges, clove cigarettes, making out to Springsteen's "Backstreets".

I might have been five years late to *Outlandos d'Amour* but I knew, even before I heard every song, that it was my soundtrack to being a bad girl. I was steeping in my favorite flavors; angst, anger, lust and longing. Before *Outlandos*, I wanted was to "hide on the backstreets" with Bruce. His longing was wistful and dreamy. But *Outlandos d'Amour*, French for outlaws of love, taught me that I wasn't wistful and dreamy; I was ravenous.

For the next six hours we drove nearly 200 miles -- and barely spoke. There were pit stops, McD's stops and gassing up but no matter what we were doing the cassette never stopped.

After I heard my favorite song on the album for the first time, I asked immediately asked Carmen, "Can we play it again?" There was a hint of a smile on her lips when she hit the rewind button.

Many people would say that, "the song" on the album is track three, "Roxanne". Maybe it's because it was the single or maybe because it was about a guy in love with a prostitute. Both are good reasons but not enough to be *my* song on the album.

"I Can't Stand Losing You" is maybe the greatest song ever written about teenaged desperation. Not in a Brooke Shields, Endless Love, I'm-going-to-burn-down-your-house-

and-get-302ed kind of way but the way we all feel in those years; lost, alone and misunderstood.

I see you've sent my letters back

And my L.P. records and they're all scratched

I can't see the point in another day

When nobody listens to a word I say

I discovered later that this song caused some controversy. "I guess you call it suicide" was a line that *had* to be written for this song to tell the true tale of desperation. We've all felt it, "I don't see the point in another day, when nobody listens to a word I say". When I hear it or play it I can still feel my deep insides – my inner bad girl screaming into the speakers "I can't, I can't, I can't stand losing".

She dropped me off at school in time for me to catch the bus and go home. After that day Carmen sometimes talked to me at the bus stop, but nothing magical ever happened again. I started to question what "being bad" even really meant. We didn't smoke weed, drink beer or vandalize public restrooms. We just listened to music all day. It was the only cure for the poison spewed by my parents, teachers and even friends whose only answer to my every question "Why?" was "because that is what you have to do".

Thank you Andy, Stewart and Sting. I still believe, 34 years later, that spending that day with *Outlandos d'Amour* revealed my true self to me -- romantic and fierce with just enough punk to be brave sometimes. I didn't need the clove cigs, or the attitude; and 34 years later I still get to have the music.