

CHARLIE SHEEN CAN GET IN MORE HOT water in more ways than just about anyone ever. In the past year or so alone, he's - well, no doubt you already know all about it: the rants against his former boss, *Two and a Half Men* creator Chuck Lorre ("that low-rent, nutless sociopath"), the parading around of his live-in so-called goddesses (one, a porn star, the other, a former nanny), the court-ordered removal of his kids from his house, the lunatic verbiage ("Vatican assassin warlocks," "tiger blood," "winning!" "banging seven-gram rocks"), the \$100 million breach-of-contract lawsuit

filed against Warner Bros. and Lorre, the entities behind *Men*, which earned him \$25 million, with more on the way, the My Violent Torpedo of Truth/Defeat Is Not an Option Tour (turned out defeat was an option, though; it kind of sucked), and so on. Last June, he finally exhausted himself and went silent, surfacing only to take the occasional swipe at *Men* and to exit a Guns N' Roses concert looking boozy if not bombed. In other words, recently, he's been a very good boy indeed.

But now, tonight, right at this very moment, he is courting trouble once more. He's out at a clubby Hollywood steakhouse called Boa, happily working his way through the charred-tuna tartare. A twentysomething girl has come over and presented herself. She says her name is Erica and that she just tried out for the role of his 15-year-old daughter on *Anger Management*, his new show on FX, but was turned down. She pouts. Dark hair, short skirt, really tight blouse, she looks scrumptious when she pouts. She turns sideways a little, showing herself off in profile. "They were like, 'You nailed it, but your body doesn't match a 15-year-old's.'"

Charlie, 46, leans out, wipes his lips with his napkin, and says, "Well, I'm no physiology expert, but I have to support them on that."

And then, just like that, it's on. Pretty soon, they're shuffling around the outside patio, smoking cigarettes. Pretty soon, Charlie is saying, "Are you married, engaged? How is it that you and I have not met up until this moment? How do we let this not be the last time we ever see each other?" Pretty soon, Charlie has her digits in his cellphone. It's really quite spectacular how it happens. Charlie's eyes are all lit up and sparkly. He's forward without being aggressive. The gravel in his voice makes it sound like a barroom brawl, but his vibe is easygoing, warm, friendly, fun. What's not to like?

"That's one of the prettiest girls I've seen in a long time - sit-down-and-weep pretty," he says later on, overflowing with poetic emotion. "Someone like her should

Contributing editor ERIK HEDEGAARD profiled Will Ferrell in RS 1152.

only exist on a Sunday. Did you see the tons of cute piled on top of her beauty? Man, I've got to get out more! That was fucking sexy as hell, man." Sitting back, he goes on, "People think that a girl comes up and I'd be like, 'Yeah, whatever.' No, I'm like a nine-year-old sitting here with his buddy, going, 'Oh, my God!' That's the Charlie Sheen nobody knows. I'm not this fucking weirdo. I don't create havoc, mayhem, wreckage. I mean, I did for a while. But it was never part of the master plan. I was just trying to keep shit propped up while it was crumbling."

A while later, he texts Erica, suggesting they get together soon, but, in fact, she is not destined to become tonight's problem. Nor are the three or four shots of tequila that Charlie downs so easily.

Instead, tonight, it's one of the gold teeth inside Charlie's mouth - specifically, the number 12 tooth, upper left, a pre-molar that snapped off on a potato chip and was replaced with gold. Ridiculous as it sounds, FX has demanded that any time Charlie steps out in public, that gold tooth needs to be camouflaged with paint. Seems they don't like the way it makes Charlie look. Seems they think it makes him look ghetto. He sighs. "A year ago, I would have been like, 'Fuck you, it's my tooth!' But why be the dick? What's the point? To show them? Show them what? Anyway, it's become this whole big deal, so now I'm like, 'OK, you're entitled.'"

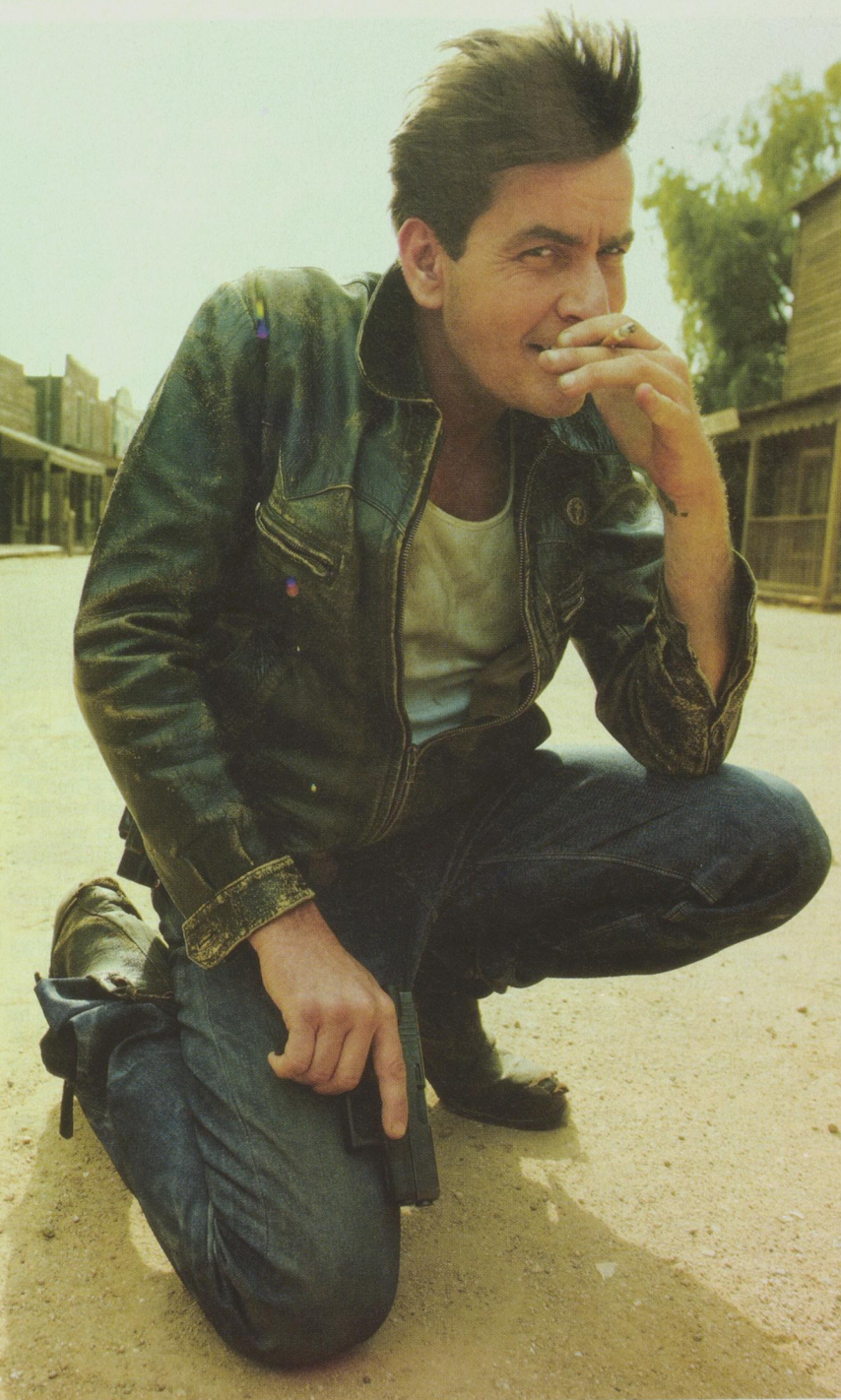
"I'm not this weirdo. I don't create havoc. I mean, I did for a while, but it was never the master plan."

But, of course, Charlie being Charlie, that tooth isn't painted tonight, and when he smiles, it's flashy and Fort Knox brilliant, and there sure are lots of paparazzi out front, just waiting for him to make an appearance. He takes a moment. He takes a breath. It could be worse. He could be in jail, or (allegedly) wrestling some guy around in the Plaza Hotel, or flinging dollars at a stripper. Much worse. "I forgot to paint my tooth, that's all," he says. And yet he really does want to toe the line. So he sails, out the back door, into a waiting car, avoiding the photographers, avoiding conflict, showing off a more mature side of himself, the Charlie Sheen nobody knows, trying to get things right for almost the first time ever in his life, if only he can.

IT'S BEEN A WILD RIDE pretty much from day one: He was born to Janet and Martin Sheen, on September 3rd, 1965, in a New York hospital, and had just crested, wasn't even out of the birth canal yet, when the first issue arose. The doctor, Irwin Chabon, noticed that the umbilical cord was pressed up against Charlie's nose, suffocating him. "Hold!" yelled Chabon, and Janet stopped pushing, which gave him time to cut the cord. "Now!" he yelled, and Janet pushed like hell. "And out Charlie came flying, and he was blue, a blue baby," recalls Martin, who was then a young unknown actor. "There was not a sound coming from him, not a breath, nothing. He was just limp." Dr. Chabon grabbed the baby by the feet and held him up and began swatting him. Janet said, "What's wrong?" Martin said, "Doesn't look good, kid." He thought Charlie was going to die and asked for him to be baptized. But then, says Martin, "Chabon hauled off and hit Charlie once again and Charlie started screaming, and he hasn't stopped since."

Nineteen years later, he got his first costarring movie role, in the 1984 teenagers-battling-commies flick *Red Dawn*, and followed that up two years later playing a slacker-hoodlum-type make-out artist in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, typecast for the first time, to considerable comedic effect. But he really didn't step out in a big way until Oliver Stone cast him in two of the decade's most incendiary films: as a bewildered gung-ho young grunt in Vietnam, in 1986's Oscar-winning *Platoon*, and as Gordon Gekko's ambitious greed-is-good protégé in 1987's *Wall Street*. The reviews were glowing, the movies were important, he was all set to star in a third Stone movie, he was going places.

But things went off-kilter rather quickly. First, Stone unceremoniously jilted him for Tom Cruise to play the lead in *Born on the Fourth of July*, and Charlie's subsequent movie choices - comedies like *Major League* and *Hot Shots!*, and action



flicks like *Navy Seals* - did nothing to bolster his rep as a serious actor, although many of them, especially those involving baseball, which is one of his big passions, were quite good. And then there was his personal life. By this time, three years into his career, his reputation as a party animal had already been well established. He whizzed around in a \$60,000 black Porsche; he carried a sheet of paper with names of women on it, listed one through 25, some given stars like a movie review, others annotated with words like "breasts," "Jacuzzi" and "cheerleader"; he owned a bunch of guns and loved nothing better than shooting them off into the ocean; and he thought about money a lot,

SINNING AND WINNING "For, like, a two-week period," Sheen says, "I was the most famous person on the planet."

having concluded, as he said in 1987, that "money is energy, man. It moves things."

It was loopy stuff even by Hollywood standards. And it only got worse. In 1990, then-fiancee Kelly Preston picked up a pair of his pants in their bathroom and out fell a tiny .22 revolver, which hit the floor and blasted a bullet into the toilet, ricocheting a piece of porcelain shrapnel into her arm; the way the story played out in public, however, Charlie shot Preston in the arm and that's why she soon left him and married John Travolta. A few years later, while

going out with model Donna Peele, Charlie took the witness stand in the trial of Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss, admitted to being a huge fan, having spent \$53,000 on her services. Even so, Peele married him shortly thereafter, forming a union that lasted less than a year. "You buy a bad car, it breaks down," Charlie said at the time. By 1998, his career had tanked and all he could do was wax philosophic: "What do you do when you've got studio heads that won't hire you, even though you screwed the same whores? Yet they pull you aside at a party and say that you're their hero for the things that you do?" That same year, he overdosed on cocaine, was hospitalized, entered rehab. "Pray for Charlie, pray for my boy. He has appetites that get him into trouble, but he has a good heart," his father said.

"When Charlie's sober, he's sweet, kind, loving, generous," said porn star and former girlfriend Ginger Lynn. "When he's drinking and using, he's out of control."

In 2000, however, he turned his career around, replacing the increasingly infirm Michael J. Fox in TV's *Spin City* for two seasons and making it an even bigger hit than it already was, and following that up, starting in 2003, with *Two and a Half Men* - playing Charlie Harper, a version of himself, never seen without a bowling shirt on his back, booze on his breath and a loose woman in his bed - which went on to earn him a record-setting \$2 million an episode. And now, he's attempting to come back once again, in *Anger Management*. It's based on the 2003 Adam Sandler/Jack Nicholson movie pretty much in name only and has Charlie playing a former baseball player whose own anger issues lead him to become a therapist. If *Anger Management* wins an audience, however, it'll most likely be due not to the quality of the show but to the immense appeal and charm of Charlie on the small screen. As *Men* has proved, no Charlie, no funny, whether replacement Ashton Kutcher gets signed for another (dismal) year or not.

But during all this time, not once has Charlie ever managed to get a conventional grip on his personal life. The result has been various stints in rehab, along with two more failed marriages (to Denise Richards, 2002-2005, and actress Brooke Mueller, 2008-2010), numerous run-ins with the law, warlocks putting hexes on him and the nutty rest of it. Still, it's pretty quiet in Charlie-town these days. He spends most of his time working on the show, which he has an unusually large vested interest in seeing succeed; his upfront salary might not be *Men*-size, but he has equity participation, and should things go well - if the initial run of 10 episodes reaches a certain ratings level, FX is obligated to buy another 90 episodes, ensuring syndication - then he stands to earn up to \$200 million over time, which is one great big bunch of thing-moving energy, man.