



**WHY I  
WOULDN'T  
CHANGE A  
THING ABOUT  
MY HOMETOWN**  
BY JOHN SEMLEY

**I**t was on a chintzy patch of street in Niagara Falls called Clifton Hill that I was first alerted to the possibility that civilization was a mistake. There, in the shadow of an enormous sculpture of Frankenstein's monster eating a branded Burger King Whopper sandwich, my underage mind muddled on enormous schooners of beer procured with a fake ID from an adjacent Boston Pizza, I watched two other drunk loafers come to blows in that messy, soused, all-Canadian way—where they sort of thrash each other and toss out soft punches, which roll off buttery cheeks gone red with drunkenness, the brawl resolving when one combatant attempts to jersey the other by pulling his shirt over his head like they're in a hockey fight.

A few blocks away were Niagara Falls—both the mighty Canadian-fronting Horseshoe Falls and, on the American side, the comparably piddling Bridal Veil—with their pummeling cascades of water that make you feel small and stupid. But there, on that corporate-gaudy tourist-trapping strip, were two hammered chuckleheads locked in a sloppy, disgusting pas de deux, barely punching each other for no discernible reason while wreaths of neon lights sang their ambient buzzing song and an enormous promotional monster looked on, unfeeling. I remember imagining a cabal of ancient Greeks wrapped in cloaks, all assembled, gazing into a crystal ball and, witnessing this, gulping hemlock and cutting off humanity then and there.

