



Reluctant Press presents:

Romance Noir

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTA HAIGHT

A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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Romance

By Ken Lambourne

The Alleyway stank of stale beer and urine, at one end was Old Compton street, at the other was the rear of a Chinese Restaurant, from which a wooden gate creaked open and an old guy came out carrying two black bin bags of rubbish, he took in the scene before him, he dropped the bags, muttered something in Chinese and quickly hurried back in slamming the gate firmly behind him.

Carlos Mendez smiled without a hint of humour revealing a glinting gold tooth.

“Hey Puto...looks like nobody’s your friend tonight, I guess I’ll have to go ahead and kill you, maybe I’ll cut you into pork chops?”

“Ah, Carlos, you’re pissed at me right? But why, my friend? Is it because I screwed your little sister Maria?...or maybe its because I took £7.000 from your boys, let everyone see you for the piece of shit that you are?”

Mendez' right hand man stepped forward out of the shadows, they called him Darko, I could see why, he was one big Motherfucker, word has it that his preferred way of killing was with his bare hands, a Spic thing about taking your enemy’s power and energy. Tonight he carried a wicked looking ice pick.

Mendez flicked his right arm forward and a long-bladed knife appeared in his hand as if by magic.

“Cool move, Carlos!...Do you know any other tricks? Like can you pull a Rabbit from your Ass?”

Suddenly Mendez was all business, he said something to Darko which I didn't understand and they both began to move in on me.

I knew that I couldn't let them circle behind me or I would most certainly be done for, either one of these guys would be a formidable adversary, but together?

Darko made the first move, oh boy, he could move fast for such a big guy, I ducked and the ice pick whistled over my head, its pin sharp tip raising a shower of sparks from the brick wall behind me, I stepped in close and swung a vicious right hand uppercut, the heavy Brass Knuckle duster that I wore shattered his jaw and knocked out most of his front teeth, he staggered back, coughing and choking on the teeth and bone debris and the blood that he was swallowing, he staggered away a few short steps before pitching face forward onto the rain slicked cobblestones...Pussy.

If Darko was fast then Mendez was faster, I sensed the blade slashing towards my face before I actually saw it, I managed to block the blow with my left arm...but at a price, the blade cut through the leather of my jacket like a hot knife through butter, slicing through flesh and muscle before hitting the bone.

He came at me again, a smile playing around his mouth, but in virtually one fluid motion I reached down and scooped up a discarded wine bottle and smashed it across Mendez' face, then, as his head came up I stuck the jagged edge of the bottle into his exposed throat, the way that his life blood left him I imagine that he was dead not long after he hit the ground.

Size Matters

I took care of Darko before I left the alleyway, after all...dead men don't talk, I felt reasonably safe about the double killings, both had built up a long list of enemy's over the past years, and I was sure that my name wouldn't be on any list of suspects.

My arm was hurting like a son of a bitch, my sleeve soaking in blood, it needed taking care of and soon, if I lost much more blood I would be passing out.

Flagging down a Black Cab on Shaftsbury avenue I told the driver to take me to Finsbury Park, north London, Gloria would know what to do, she would help me, maybe even put me up for a night or two? I got the cab driver to drop me off on Fonthill road, when he was out of sight I walked the remaining several hundred yards to Lennox road.

Gloria owned number 327 which was situated not far from a Primary school, she had the house converted into three self-contained flats, keeping the top floor flat for herself, and renting out the other two.

Stopping outside and glancing up, I saw that the house was in darkness, pressing the night light button on my old Casio told me that it was 02.25 AM My head was spinning and my vision blurred as I reached the front door.

I rang Gloria's bell over and over again but got no response, I began to beat on the door but my efforts seemed to be so feeble and weak, in what seemed to be slow motion I sank to the ground beneath my feet...just before I lost consciousness I remember strong hands lifting and supporting me.

A female voice sounding close to tears said :

"Oh my God...just look at all the blood!"

"Look, lets just get him inside, okay? It may not be as bad as it looks, lets save the panicking till later."

Everything was a blur after that, I couldn't tell the difference between reality or dreaming.

Faces floated in and out of my line of vision...four beautiful young women, my "Angels." I awoke sometime later, I lay in a large comfortable bed, I was naked all but for sheets of crisp white linen.

My injured left arm had been carefully cleaned and dressed, it throbbed like a son of a bitch but was no longer anywhere near as painful.

"So, you're awake then are you? You drifted into such a deep sleep...we were worried about you."

"Honestly, there's really no need for you to, I'm feeling much better thank you, one more night here if you Ladies don't mind too much, give me a chance to get some of my strength back?"

"Sure Babe, not a problem, I'm sure that the other girls won't have a problem with that, in fact they'll be pleased to have a good looking guy around for a while!...you can stay for as long as you like, Hon"

Saturday Night Fever

I awoke around 8 AM Saturday Morning, I was feeling rested and refreshed.

About twenty minutes later there was a knock at the bedroom door, it was opened cautiously and four pretty faces appeared round the door, each prettier than the one before it.

"So how are you feeling now big boy? We have been really worried about you, in fact, at one point last night you were so bad we almost rang for a Doctor."

"My name is Greg, Greg Carter, and I want to thank you ladies for your help, who knows, I may not have made it with out you, now, where is Gloria?"

"She had a phone call to say that her Mom was really Ill, she had been rushed into Hospital, apparently it was touch and go whether she made it or not, well, you know Gloria, she packed a bag and took the first available flight home to Spain, this was three days ago, and we are still waiting for word from her Greg."

The four pretty young girls crowded into the room, I quickly gathered from their worried expressions that they thought there was something that I should know

"Come on girls...what is it? Surely it can't be all that bad?"

A pretty little brunette said...

"I hope that you still feel the same way in another couple of minutes or so...just promise that you won't turn violent, OK?...It'll be easier to show you than try to explain."

As if on cue, the four girls stepped out of their flimsy nightdresses and stood before me, and for once in my life, I was totally speechless.

All of the girls had long straight hair, there were three blondes and one brunette, each was pretty in their own differing way, all of the girls had gorgeous hour glass figures, wide of hip, narrow of waist and full of breasts, their beauty was flawed by one thing...and one thing only...each girl had a most masculine looking cock swaying between her long shapely legs.

I thought that this was some kind of elaborate joke except for the fact that two of the girls were crying...ashamed at what they had become? "But how?...why?" I exclaimed.

"Believe me, it's a long story," said the brunette.

Trying not to stare I said "Hey I'm not going anywhere, not yet anyway, but please, before we go any further, can you put your clothes back on?"

The three blondes were named Caroline, Fiona and Stephanie, and the brunette Rebecca, and they were Callgirls, Hookers, Prostitutes, call them what ever you like, it all amounted to the same thing, they sold themselves for money...it was as simple as that.

"Okay, the prostitution I can understand up to a point, but why feminise yourselves like this? You are far more female than male, for crying out loud! How could you allow someone to do this to you?"

Bad Men

Stephanie sat down on the edge of the bed which I occupied, apart from her mascara which her crying had caused to run, her pretty face was devoid of makeup.

I can't deny the shock and revulsion I had first felt at seeing that "the girls were really boys" but I still felt pity for the pathetic creature sat before me, her voice was full of pain and anguish as she looked at me and said :

STEPHANIES STORY

"So, do you honestly believe that I would let someone do this to me? I don't want to be a girl, my life is like a living nightmare, it all started back in November 1997, I'd left my home in Wallasey on the Wirral for the bright lights of the big city, with just the one change of clothes, my CD Discman, a small wash bag, a well read copy of Dean Koontz's novel "*Seize the night*" and £230 in cash all packed into a small "NIKE" backpack...I was fourteen years old and I was ready to face the world.

"Within 48 hours of arriving in London I had been beaten up and robbed on a busy road full of people, I lay there helpless as I was relieved of my backpack containing all of my worldly goods, yet nobody stopped to help me.

"All that I was left with was the change in my pocket...a little under £4.

"I had no intention of involving the Police, they would only send me home again, and I would rather remain here than that...I could just hear my parents saying:

'See Davey lad, what did we tell you? But no, you always know best don't you? Well perhaps this will teach you a much needed lesson.'

"My Mom would always say :

'Come on love, don't cry, you always were the sensitive one...I think that you should have been born a girl sweetheart, you're wasted as a boy!'

"Finding the nearest public washroom / toilet I cleaned myself up the best that I could, my clothes were scuffed and torn but there wasn't much that I could do about that right now.

"I had a wicked looking bruise just above my left eye, and my right knee was swollen to the point where I could barely put any weight on it at all.

"Managing to hobble, I made my way to *Bobs Diner* over on Berwick Street right in the middle of Soho's red light area, hey why not...I had £4 left to spend!

"I just managed to make it through the door when the skies opened, wow!...storm of the century, the biggest cloudburst I had ever seen...awesome!

"From a corner table I sat and eat a sausage toastie and drank coffee, within ten minutes there wasn't a free seat to be had except for two at my table for which nobody seemed interested, a small group of people huddled in the doorway trying to find protection from the torrential rain, suddenly the people parted to give way to a man and woman, the guy was not so much big as absolutely huge, standing a good seven foot tall and weighing at least 280lb, the cream coloured two piece suit that he wore was Italian, and probably cost more than my old man made in three months, he carried a black wooden walking cane the shaft of which was inlaid with intricate patterns of gold, its handle was a vicious looking Chinese dragon, its eyes rubies, its long tail entwined around a foot of the wooden cane."

THE WOMAN

The woman, or perhaps the girl would be a better description, who accompanied the big guy was stunning, what with her perfect figure and flawless features, she was dressed very stylishly in a grey-coloured tailored two-piece skirt suit, black leather court shoes with 2-inch heels, her sheer black hose was covered in a motif of tiny bows.

Beneath her suit jacket she wore a blouse of pure white silk with a mandarin neckline, at her throat she wore a small golden Chinese Dragon on a thin gold chain.

Her long straight blond hair reached almost to her narrow waist, it shone like spun gold.

Crossing the small room they stopped before my table.

"Do you mind if we join you? There doesn't appear to be another table free?"

"Na...Na...not at all, please feel free."

"Why thank you, young man, now where are my manners? Please, let me introduce myself, I am Nathaniel Devores, whilst this delightful creature is Miss Trudy Maxwell, my personal assistant and companion, and you are?"

"Me?...I'm, I'm Richard, Richard North."

"Oh dear, your poor face! What on earth has happened to you? Can we help get you to a Hospital?"

"No please, I'm alright...honestly, it could have been worse, two of them beat me up, what? Not five minutes from here, they took everything that I had, every last penny, I feel like such a fool!"

"Come now my dear boy, surely you don't have yourself to blame?...Look, you must come with Trudy and I, we can take care of you until you decide what you want to do,"

“No, I couldn’t impose on you really...I’ll be fine, I’ll just.”

“Nonsense, you are coming with us, and that’s the end of the matter, but first food! Let’s eat!”

Trudy ordered a Chicken salad with a diet Coke, Nathaniel went for a massive steak with all the trimmings and a black coffee.

And me? A Beef burger & fries and a can of Coke, I was surprised at just how hungry I felt...despite the beating I’d received.

Pushing back my plate, I relaxed on my chair...“That was great, thank you very much.”

I gently explored my battered face with my fingertips, wincing as they trailed over a nasty bruise on my right cheek.

“Does it hurt?” asked Nathaniel.

“Yeah, like a son of a bitch!”

“I’m sure that these will help you my young friend.” Unscrewing the ornate head of his cane beneath which were a dozen or so small white tablets, he handed me two which I accepted reluctantly.

“What are these for?” I asked.

“Just mild painkillers, dear chap, they will help to ease your aches and pains, and also give you a good night’s sleep.”

Trudy nodded encouragingly....“I take them all the time, the tablets are fine...honestly!”

I accepted them reluctantly, washing them down with a glass of iced water from the pitcher on the table.

Within minutes I was feeling dizzy and disorientated, strong hands supported me as I was lead out to their car.

The drive seemed to last forever, it was almost as if we were floating on clouds as Nathaniel expertly guided the BMW through the congested London streets.

The remainder of the journey and arriving at our destination was a blur to me, it was still dark when I awoke sometime later to find myself in a strange bed, it didn’t take me long to realise that my clothes were missing...I was totally naked!

Trudy woke me at around 8am :

“Hey come on sleepy head...time to rise and shine! Breakfast will be ready in another thirty minutes or so, why not go take a shower? I’m afraid that there was nothing we could do to save your clothes Richard, you’ll just have to make use of these for the time being.”

When Trudy had left the room, I slipped out of bed to examine the bundle of clothes which she’d left on the bed for me.

It didn’t take me long to realise that I couldn’t wear them...they were girl’s clothes! In anger I threw them down onto the bed, was this some kind of joke for crying out loud!