

One For The Road

By Brian Buckley TY1

The knife came down, moving through the air with a whoosh. It penetrated the skin with a squish. It glinted like glass as it rose again and followed home into the victim's chest. The victim's body lay there lifeless in the pool of crimson blood. There was dead silence and the killer stood there staring at the man's face, feeling empty and lost, as if it had all been meaningless. Suddenly, he saw the victim's face jump to life and he screamed, the cry emanating from his mouth.

The man awoke from his nightmare. He was terrified, his pulse was racing, sweat dripped from his body and he breathed heavily. He took a minute to deeply analyse the meaning of his dream of his dream and he started to panic when he finally realised what he had done. He threw off the covers and put on his check shirt, blue jeans and working shoes that he had thrown on the floor earlier on after work. He raced around the house frantically trying to find his keys. Suddenly his wife appeared from the darkness rubbing her eyes to make to make them adjust to the light and said slowly and tiredly, "What's going on? Where are you going at this time?" The man turned around slowly and had a disgusted look on his face. "Don't you dare question me! All I want is to be respected in my own home," he roared. "Now get back to bed, or you'll be sorry!" He turned and opened the door swiftly.

He turned the key in a circular motion with a click and slammed on the accelerator. The fog hung over the ground like a white blanket. The moon was perched high in the sky, a yellow dot in the black horizon. Trees lay battered and uprooted on the ground. It looked like the funeral of nature. Darkness started to consume everything around it. All the animals had retired or left this place long ago. The earth stirred as the roar of the man's engine grew louder. Dead leaves cracked and scattered as the large, black, worn tyres crushed them with little effort. The exhaust pipe glugged as it expelled black smoke. The car, a dark, red Diesel 4X4, had contracted rust from the relentless wind and rain.

Perspiration lined the man's forehead and ran down his face in a trickle. His heart was working like a jack-hammer. Suddenly a horrible, rancid, pungent smell caught the man's nostrils. He turned his head slowly towards the passenger's seat and he was shocked at what he saw. There right before his eyes was the man he has seen in his dream. He sat there, with his leg crossed over his knee and whistling to himself. The mysterious passenger then broke

the silence by saying, "Surprised to see me?" The man opened his mouth to say something but no sound came out. He was speechless. "Well what's wrong? Cat got your tongue?" "But, but you're dead." He had long, black, greasy hair. His face was tanned and his skin sallow, which reminded the man of caked in mud. He was a handsome man with high, chiseled, and pronounced cheekbones as if they were had been sculpted from marble. He seemed to be well groomed and had a hooked nose and gleaming eyes. He was a well-dressed man who wore Levi jeans, a v-neck shirt and brown boots with spurs like a cowboy in the Wild West.

"Cheer up honey-pie. What's the matter? Have I touched a nerve?" "This can't be real, I don't believe this is real, it's all a dream." The passenger then looked at him seriously and said in a low tone, "Oh, this is as real as that policeman in squad car behind us."

The man heard the sounds of sirens behind them and saw in his rearview mirror the haze of red and blue light crossing over each other. He then heard a stern voice ordering, "Pull over!" "You can forget your master plan now mate, because he will find me." The man started to panic after hearing the words of the passenger. He then gathered his thoughts and made the decision to pull over.

The policeman walked slowly and cautiously towards the driver's side. He shone a flashlight through the window. The man looked up slowly and asked nervously, "What seems to be the problem officer?" The policeman replied to the man's question, "Your back headlight is out. License and registration please." The man let a sigh of relief and said, "Whew, I thought it was something serious." The policeman looked at him bewildered and replied, "What would you classify as serious?" The man panicked and blurted out, "Well, I suppose murder or possession of drugs." The policeman could see that the man was flustered and he asked, "Can I have a look in the booth of your car?" The passenger reappeared and startled the man when he whispered in his ear sarcastically, "Oh now you've done it."

The man looked wide-eyed and expressionless. He finally replied, "Sure." The policeman walked casually towards the back of the car, the watched nervously as he did so. The passenger then said mockingly and rhythmically, "He's going to find me, he's going to find me." The man was shouting to be heard over the chorus of chants, "No he won't!" Before the policeman could open the booth the man slammed on the accelerator and sped down the road leaving the policeman stranded in a cloud of dust. "Ahhhh", the passenger moaned like a child not having it's own way. "Come on this isn't you. Do you remember when we first met?"

The man was brought back to a time weeks, even months ago. He could remember his wife running through the front door exclaiming, "We've been invited to a party by the new neighbours." The man lowered the newspaper that he was so fond of reading and asked bluntly, "Why?" His wife's face dropped and she replied, "Because maybe they want to get to know us." "Okay, but only because you have been good," he replied. His wife looked beautiful. His wife wore a luscious, fashionable red dress, which suited her figure. She had long brown hair that settled in front of her ears. Her face was plastered with make-up giving it a peachy colour. Her lips were ruby red coloured and her eyelashes were like the feathers on the wings of a bird. The man was a very casual man. He wore a pair of cream cords with brown shoes and a sleeveless blue shirt. He was sallow which had the appearance of caked in mud. He had brown sweptback hair that settled behind his ears. He was a well-built man and he had deep blue eyes.

They left the car at home and decided to walk to the party, as it was mild outside. He remembered arriving. They stood anxiously outside the black and gold tipped gates but they gathered their courage and stepped in. The pathway was lined with pebbles and the garden was illuminated by the spectacular, dazzling outdoor lights. The water sparkled as it exploded from the ornate, white fountain. They stopped at narrow steps that seemed to elevate into heaven by the looks of the house. It's colour was white with large white pillars like they were moulded and shaped by gods.

The interior of this villa like mansion was spectacular and breath taking. There was beautiful mosaic tiling throughout the enormous hallway. They were all an image of the star sign Pisces with the two fish in twined in one another. The walls were covered in a light, powder blue colour, which made the room look like an aquarium. Turkish carpets and rugs were laden the room. There were also oil paintings depicting classical scenes from the Bible such as the parable of the Loaves and the Fishes. On a thick mahogany coloured table there was a jumble of framed photographs. A large silver frame held the house owner's wedding picture.

They were led into a large dining hall. The walls contained crossed swords with a large family coat of arms with a black crest containing three white bullheads. There was a green marble plaque over the doorway. It had a Medusa's head at the bottom and Eve giving Adam the forbidden fruit at the top. Old, heavy, pine furniture was aligned in a circular shape around the large, black, marble fireplace with a silvery, metal grate. There was a large, long dining table set with a white cloth, silvery cutlery, crystal glasses for

four types of wine and white dinner plates. With a set up like this there must have been servants.

Finally a soft, heavenly voice, tried to be heard over the large crowd. “Okay, you can all be seated now.” They were all seated and after a three-course meal, they had time to mingle. The man and his wife stood together in the crowd not talking or looking at each other. The passenger started to walk slowly and casually over to the couple and broke the silence by saying, “Are you two enjoying yourselves?” The man’s wife looked towards her husband and he nodded as if to say he was approving her to reply. “Yes this is a lovely set up you’ve got here.” “Thank you. I must say you look ravishing tonight.” Then suddenly the pressure grew up in him like a pressure cooker and it was only a matter of time before this pressure was released.

The man looked in the passenger’s direction and said, “Yeah, I remember everything.” But there was nobody there. The man continued to accelerate steadily through the countryside. There was always the thought of the squad car showing up again, he couldn’t go back to prison. The surrounding features were melancholy and morose. The trees resembled faces with blank expressions etched into the bark. The man’s Jeep plunged more and more into the darkness. Finally it screeched to a halt and the man quickly made his way out of the car. He proceeded to the booth of the car and opened it slowly and cautiously. He grabbed his shovel. He grasped the handle of the body bag and dragged it along the dirty, mossy ground. It was heavier than he thought. He veered off the road into a wooded area. Slowly the outside world drifted away, as darkness seemed to be found. Underneath the limbs of evergreens, he found a fallen tree and sat, letting his mind wander to take him to another time. Eventually all thought seemed to leave as he zoned out in a daze, where time becomes erased and all becomes forgotten; frozen for a minute, maybe an hour. One dead heart and one dead soul continue to beat inside of him for those moments of nothingness that so often occurs.

He remembers his wife being happier and more considerate. He was very suspicious of this. He said he had to leave because he had finally got some work doing a plumbing job. He waited in the darkness of the basement. He heard a second set of footsteps and a man’s voice echoing through the house. The man heard the thundering of footsteps frantically racing up the stairs and he decided it was safe to come out and investigate. He firstly noticed the second car in the front driveway. He slowly and quietly slipped upstairs and he heard a terrible sound. He heard the count of the beats of the rusty springboard.

He then saw through the crack of the door, the man from the party sitting up with the covers pooled around his waist, a cigarette burning between his fingers and looking into her eyes. "He wants to keep beating you," he said. "The more times you stay with him, the more he can beat you. It's good for him. But it's not good for you."

The man turned away from the doorway and as he walked quietly down the stairs, there was no doubt in his mind that he would not kill him. The man began to become good friends with the passenger and gained his trust gradually. He then arranged for his wife to go on a luxury weekend, while he asked his new friend over to the house for a few beers and to watch the game with him. He then lured him into his living room, closed all the curtains and stabbed him to death. Before this night, he confronted his wife about the affair. She jumped as if he'd struck her with a quirt. "How did you know about it?" she asked panicked. "It was only a matter of time," he replied. "Have you been spying on me?" she asked. "It would have been the only way I could have known for sure," he replied and that's when the beatings started again.

After what seemed like an eternity, he slowly got up to leave, to go down another path and see where he shall end up. As he began to walk slowly into the wooded area, dark clouds formed within the sky. In his eyes you could see a transformation, as fear was slowly born. The winds rose. His small bit of power slowly faded away. Shadows danced at night but this dream was not a dream it seemed. The man thought this whole thing was fate and everything that happened had a meaning. Somehow he knew the passenger's name though he'd never been told as if he had seen it in a dream. After a painful life, his heart gave into fate. He stopped fleeing and shying away and he was led straight to it. The past can never be erased, a past that he wished to be gone forever.

He continued to drag the body through the wooded area until he reached a certain point in the middle of the wooded area, where the trees cleared and there was an open patch that was beckoning him to dig it up. The man gave into these requests and drove his shovel into the ground with a squelch. The smell of fresh soil caught his nostrils as he dug the grave deeper. Suddenly the passenger stood beside him and he startled the man by saying, "so this is it, this is the best you can do?" "Just shut up. Now you'll never bother me again." "Oh, don't be so sure. I will follow you to the grave if necessary." The man swiped at the air and he heard the sound of laughter fading and then nothing.

He opened the body bag and dragged the body out and threw him into the shallow grave. He began to cave in the sides and cover back over the grave

and he stopped. Suddenly he began to cry and said, “You got what you deserved. You made me, you son of a biii...” He paused. He felt a cold clammy hand on his shoulder and as if to mimic the man lying before him, he had the same look of fear and innocence on his face.

The End