

I Want Candy

By Tony Black

Been working homicide twenty years, but this kinda thing, you don't see every day.

"It's the pits, Jake."

"The pits, that's it? That's what you got for me?"

Billy's mouth dropped, but I wasn't finished.

"A pregnant woman, battered to death with a nine iron, the child cut outta her, the strays in the alley eating her guts...and that's all you got to say? The pits!"

"Jake, I..."

"Forget about it!" I hit out, coulda took down a wall with that one.

Billy didn't see it coming. He got up and walked, grimaced and flashed hurt blue eyes as he spat blood at me.

Two days later they took my badge.

Now, I'm doing security in a 7-Eleven in Buffalo. Earning minimum wage and sending half it back to my ex-wife upstate. You'd think life couldn't get any worse...then I stumbled on Candy.

"Jake! *Jake!* Get your goat-smellin' ass out here."

I swear, that bastard tries to bigfoot me one more time, I'm poppin' a cap in his wide old ass.

I walk through to the front counter, with like - you guessed it - the Irish in me rising like a rain cloud.

"You want sumthin, Mr. Delago?"

"Course I damn well want sumthin, asshole. Think I'm hollering for my health? Help this lady out with her groceries would ya? And put them in the trunk, too!"

He turned that greasy head of his towards her, spat out one of those lousy piranha smirks of his: "Always glad to help a lady," he said, adding softly, "'specially one so fine."

Delago got a smile back, but her eyes were on the roll of meat spilling over his belt. "Much obliged to you, kind sir!" she said, turning tail and wigglin' her ass at us both.

Please. I mean, was anyone still falling for this Daisy Duke shit in 2007? I slung arms round the groceries and followed her out.

"I'm the Caddy," she said, smiling, "pink one!"

Oh, how did I guess? I nodded and headed off in the direction of the shiny phallus, trimmed in chrome. All the while I could feel her eyeballing me as she rolled a cherry licorice between her lips.

"You look like you been workin' out there, fella."

I'd heard all the lines, but most times, I hadn't been on the other end of them. As I popped the trunk, I felt her hand on my ass - then (Christ would you ever) - her tongue on my neck.

I didn't tell Candy about my being a cop.
 "This place sucks!" she said.
 "Whatcha expect? The sign outside says 'Rooms by the Hour'."
 "We shoulda went to the Holiday Inn, they got a pool."
 I sat up, reached for my pack of Luckies on the bed stand, "I didn't know you wanted to swim."
 She smiled at me, climbed on top and stuck her hooters out like a cowgirl at the rodeo, "Give it to me."
 "Honey, you're gonna kill me...I gotta take five."
 "The smoke, wise-ass."
 I could tell she was a restless one. Always that look in her eye, darting off somewhere, searching for the next big adventure. Christ, that was the last thing I needed dragging along on. I'd had my fill of that kinda thing.
 "I gotta get back to the city," she said.
 "New York?"
 "Course, where else?" she said, rolling off and parting her legs in the birthing position as she blew smoke-rings to the ceiling. "This place ain't got no action."
 I took back my smoke, said: "Suits me fine. Less action the better."
 "Horseshit!" She sat up, shook the bed as she threw back her long blonde hair, "You're just like me...you're primed!"
 "Get outta here!"
 Candy jumped on the bed like it was a trampoline. My Lucky went flying and I landed on my ass, staring up at her from the floor as she stomped up and down like a five-year-old, shouting, "Jake, I'm gonna rock your world!"
 I didn't doubt it.

One time, there wasn't much could butter my muffin - these days, I'm not doin' too good keeping a lid on. Say what you like about me, and some have said plenty, but what sets me burning is injustice.
 Delago was riding me, "Jake, goddamn, how many times? How many times? Get that fucking deadwood away from the dumpsters!"
 He was talking about the winos. Most times, they're the way they are because they can't help themselves. But the point was missed on Delago.
 "I gotta get a bat myself and break their fucking heads?" he said.
 "Mr Delago, what you're saying is illegal."
 "Illegal... Hold on, remind me when you got outta Harvard Law School, Jake. Huh? C'mon, remind me."
 "I'm only saying..."
 He cut me off, waddled over and slapped a wet paw on my face, "You ain't saying nuthin, you'll do as--"
 I tried countin' to ten, I really did, but I only got as far as two.

I took Delago's little finger in my hand and snapped it back so hard I thought I'd taken it right off. His eyes turned black. Then he dropped on the asphalt, cupping his hand to his heart, and keeled over in shock.

I stared for a while, until the sound of the winos scattering made me look up. Candy was stood at the edge of the lot, blonde hair blowin' wild as she leaned on the fire-escape, smoking a Lucky.

"Now, I know you're gonna need some action, cowboy," she hollered.

Does everyone become what they despise? My daddy asked me that one in high school. He probably had a reason, some incident, some mistake I'd made...whatever it was, I didn't remember it now.

"Just sit tight honey-pie," she said, "and when you see me come running round that corner, you gun that motherfucker till she screams, y'hear?"

I heard alright. I just didn't have the words. Nodded.

"Good boy," Candy leaned over, placed her wet red lips on my cheek and smiled. "You'll do just fine!"

As she left, her smell lingered in the Caddy. That French perfume she wore, the smell of her hair, her scent. Man, she'd invaded me.

The bank was two blocks from where we'd parked. The back way out led right onto the alley where I sat drumming my fingers on the wheel - like a teenager hot to take the family sedan for a first spin. Time was lost to me. Coulda been a half-hour, coulda been minutes. But I was so keyed when I heard the gunshots, I had to open the door and heave my guts on the sidewalk.

I tried to screw the nut, get in line. But my hands were shaking so hard I couldn't turn the key in the ignition. Then I saw Candy, running.

"Start the fucking car!" she yelled.

I couldn't get my hands to work.

"Start the motherfucking car!"

I don't know from where, but I found a line of cool, suddenly the Cadillac purred to life and I screeched those tires like bush pigs fucking.

Candy dived through the near-side window and waved me to burn the road up, "Get the fuck outta here."

I could hear the sirens now, saw the Mars lights speeding along the highway. I turned through the alleys. There was a drill for these things. I knew what the boys would be doing; I just had to hold in my guts and drive, slow and steady.

"What the fuck was wrong with you back there?" said Candy, climbing into the front seat and checking on the loot.

"I don't know."

"You don't fucking know, no shit! That's exactly right."

"Look, I..."

"Don't go saying sorry on me, you know I hate men who say 'sorry'. Man, you're one fucking candy-ass bastard to be taking along on a job."

"Look, I..."

"Enough already, I told you. Didn't I tell you?"

She was keyed. The adrenaline had twisted her face. I hardly recognized her now. Truth told, I hated this person and what she'd made me do.

"Man, you are one weak bastard, Jake...I shoulda known better. That was nearly a repeat of NY. I didn't have you down as a Lottie Tanner. No I didn't."

The name hit me, "Who?"

"Bitch on my last job, turned yellow on me, wanted to split before we done the deal...she got hers."

I looked to Candy, she was still counting the cash. "How?" I said.

She turned to me, smiled. I swear that look in her eye came closer to evil than I'd ever seen. "I carved her, good and deep." She made a slashing move with her arm. "She was carrying, but the deal was to sell on...hell, the kid was her pimp's for fuck's sake!"

Candy looked back down at the cash. She was smiling.

"That name, Lottie Tanner..."

"Yeah."

"Think I might of heard it before."

Candy looked up, I saw her reaching into the bag for her Colt, but my foot was already on the brake. Her head hit the windshield like a ten-pin strike.

I stopped the car. Leaned over to Candy and put her hands behind her back, took off my belt to tie them.

"Time for a trip downtown, honey."

Tony Black's first novel PAYING FOR IT was published by Random House in 2008. Ken Bruen kindly praised the book, saying it "blasts off the page like a triple malt . . . one adrenaline-pumped novel that is as moving and compassionate as it is so stylishly written." More of his writing can be found online at: Scotsman.com, Thug Lit, Shots Magazine, Demolition, Pulp Pusher and in Out of the Gutter. Black lives and works in Edinburgh. Reach him at: t_black_uk@yahoo.co.uk