

Voodoo Dolls

By D.Z. Allen

Shit. Not another one.

Tim Kenny stood in the doorway of his hotel room and stared at the voodoo doll propped up on the bed like some kind of obscene teddy bear. He set the briefcase on a small table by the window and walked to the bed.

There was a note pinned to its chest.

Tim hesitated as he reached for the doll. He couldn't look away from its little blue button eyes. They seemed to bore into his skull and suck the will right out of him. He forced his eyes closed and reached forward, expecting a violent shock or something when his fingers contacted the doll.

He felt rough burlap. No violent jolt of electricity. Tim closed his hand around the doll and opened his eyes. He pulled the paper note up and folded it back over the doll's face. He felt the blood rush out of his head as he read the note: *It's the bank or your wife. Don't drop the ball. Keep your eye on the prize. She really is quite lovely. We're enjoying the hell out of her. Pump enough smack into her and she settles right down and seems to enjoy herself. Looks like it's my turn with her. Stay focused. J*

Rage boiled inside of him and he threw the doll across the room. He imagined his wife and pictured what she was going through. Why was this happening to them? One day he comes home from an exciting day of selling insurance and finds his wife gone and a voodoo doll on the kitchen table.

He got up, went to the suitcase, popped the locks and opened it. Inside was a Browning 9mm and two duffel bags. They'd given him the case yesterday. He'd found the second doll then, sitting on the toilet in his hotel room, a note pinned to its chest. *You've got a package at the front desk. Oh, your wife has amazing tits. You are one lucky son of a bitch! J*

Tim picked up the Browning and looked it over. He'd only fired a gun a few times at a shooting range with his uncle. He knew how to check the clip and fire the weapon but it felt alien and intimidating in his hands. He pressed the gun to his temple and considered pulling the trigger. The barrel felt cold and hard against his skull. Burning fury and desperation within him almost pushed him over the edge. Then he thought of his wife, drugged up and raped. He wasn't that big of a coward. He had to go through with it for her.

Tim put the pistol back in the case. There was a job to do.

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He found the third voodoo doll in the front seat of his rental car. The note detailed the two-minute rule. He had to be out of the bank within two minutes of pulling his gun or the odds were that he would be caught and

sent to prison. If that happened, his wife would be killed. If he called the police or they became involved in any way, his wife would be killed. If he came out of the bank without any money, his wife would be killed.

He tossed the doll over his shoulder into the back seat and drove. He had one stop to make before the bank. On the way, he pulled out a pack of Kools and lit one up with his Zippo. He'd quit smoking two months ago. It seemed like as good a time as any to take up the old habit.

Tim sat in the rental car outside the Western State Bank and tried not to puke all over himself. Sweat streaked down his face and his hands shook uncontrollably. "I can't fucking do this! Jesus Christ help me!" He tried to light another cigarette and had to use the car's lighter. His hands were too jittery to use the Zippo.

He looked at the passenger seat and stared at the case that held the Browning and the two duffel bags. He looked back at the double doors of the bank and pounded the steering wheel in frustration.

Tim reached behind the front seat and grabbed the brown paper bag he'd picked up at his first stop. He took the cap off the bottle of Jack and took a quick hit. "Pull yourself together, asshole." He took another hit and felt the whiskey burn all the way down. "You don't have a choice."

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The whiskey didn't calm him down much but at least his hands weren't shaking. He walked into the bank and approached a teller window. He pulled the gun and pointed it at the young woman. Her face went white.

"Fill these up." Tim tossed the duffel bags at her. "Get the manager, I want it from the vault." He jumped the counter and landed beside her. He noticed customers and employees fleeing the bank. He didn't care. Just get in and get the hell out.

Shit! He didn't check the time when he came in. He had no idea how much of his two minutes had gone by. He pointed the gun at the terrified woman. "Move!"

A forty something woman in a business suit stepped up. "Please stay calm. I'm the manager and I'll get you whatever you want. Please, just stay calm."

Tim swung the gun toward her. "I don't want to hurt anybody. I just want these filled so I can get the hell outta here."

They went into the vault and Tim watched them fill the duffels with cash. After thirty seconds or so he stepped up to them and sped things along. Once the bags were full he zipped them closed, tucked the 9mm in his pants, and carried the bags to the front counter.

He tried to open the door that lead to the lobby but couldn't get it open. He kicked at it in frustration then looked to the bank manager. "Buzz me out dammit!"

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Tim tossed the bags in the back seat. He pulled the gun out of his pants, got in and accelerated away from the bank. He noticed another voodoo doll in the front seat and almost drove the rental into a phone pole. He felt light headed and started to see white spots swimming around in front of him, like he was hyperventilating.

Tim pulled the car to the side of the road and grabbed the whiskey. He took the bottle out and breathed into the bag. Things seemed to get better. He grabbed the bottle and took a big hit. The doll stared up at him. He picked it up and read the note: *Nice job in there! You're our best customer yet. I've got to tell you, I'm really going to miss your wife. She's been more than cooperative and our time together has been just wonderful. Listen, maybe I can stop by for a quickie every now and then when this is all over. I think she might enjoy that. Drive to the parking garage at 77th and Stark. 4th level, SE corner. You've got ten minutes. J*

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Tim pulled into the parking garage and drove to the 4th level. It was mostly empty. A large black van sat parked in the SE corner. He felt for the bottle of Jack, never taking his eyes off the van, and took another swig. Then he reached beside him and put a hand on the 9mm.

He noticed a blue sedan pull up the ramp behind him. It followed at a distance of about three car lengths. These were the pieces of shit who had terrorized, tortured and raped his wife. These were the pricks who made him rob a bank and destroyed his life.

Tim felt his pulse quicken. He felt the heat of anger rage inside of him. He parked three spaces away from the van then took another drink of the Jack. He grabbed the nine and got out of the car. The van's sliding door opened and he saw his wife. Her face was covered with cuts. She had two black eyes. She was stripped from the waist down, her legs covered in deep purple bruises.

Jesus Christ, he thought. He tightened his grip on the Browning. No way things could ever be the same.

A yell came from behind him. "Drop the gun! Drop it now or you both die!"

Tim almost laughed at that. They were both dead already. These assholes had killed them the night they took his wife. He walked back to the rental.

"Don't move!"

He opened the back door, unzipped the duffel bags and poured the rest of the Jack all over the money. He noticed the voodoo doll on the floor. He picked it up and stuffed it in his pocket.

"What the fuck is he doing?" someone yelled.

"Get out of the damn van and pop him!" another voice screamed.

Tim pulled out his Zippo, sparked it up, and tossed it on the money.

The flash of flame blinded him for a second and he felt the hair on his face and head singe. He backed out of the car.

"What the fuck!" screamed the guy by the blue sedan.

Tim raised the Browning and fired. The guy by the blue sedan spun and fell. Movement from the van. Tim ran toward it. He heard pops echo around the parking garage, he felt several impacts, like solid punches hitting his body. He didn't care.

The heat from the rental car filled the garage as it went up in flames.

He made it to his wife, she looked alive but barely. A guy in a white T-shirt came around the side of the van and shot him. Tim saw the muzzle flash twice. Felt two more fists slam into his gut. He raised the Browning and pulled the trigger until the guy fell backward.

Tim lost his balance and rolled out of the van, falling to the cement. He was looking under the van and saw another guy looking back at him, eyes wide - terrified. Another of the guys who had done terrible things to the love of his life. Tim raised the gun and pulled the trigger four times. The guy's face exploded.

It was getting hard to move now. Tim crawled past the flaming rental car as the fire sprinklers came to life. Alarms screamed and a deluge of water soaked everything. He crawled up to the guy in the white T-shirt and saw he was still moving. He put two more in his head.

The third guy, the one who'd followed him in the blue sedan, was sitting on the cement, his back against the car. He was ghostly white and looked at Tim with tired, vacant eyes. His long, dark hair soaked and matted to his head. Water dripped off the end of his nose and lips. He still had a gun in his hand but wasn't making an effort to raise it.

Tim couldn't stand. Everything felt numb. He crawled up to the guy leaning against the car. Tim tried to speak but blood slipped out of his mouth and dripped to the concrete. He spit out the rest of it so he could talk. "You J?"

Tim heard a bubbling whistle sound and looked at the guy's chest. His shirt was black with blood. The sucking came from the hole in his chest.

The guy looked at Tim, pale and defeated. Tim could see his lips turning blue.

"I'll take that as a yes," Tim said. He summoned the last of his strength and got himself up on his knees. He pulled out the voodoo doll from his pocket. With his left hand he shoved the doll into J's face and held it there. He raised the Browning and pressed the barrel between the doll's little blue button eyes.

J let out a small groan. Tim didn't know if it was from fear or the man's last dying words. He didn't much care.

Tim pulled the trigger. The doll exploded. J's sucking chest stopped.

Tim couldn't see. He was tired. So very tired. He let the Browning fall to the ground, his body fell right behind it. The last thing Tim felt was the cool rain of sprinkler water pelting his skin.

At least his wife would live. Maybe she could put her life back together, maybe she couldn't. But he'd given her the chance.

D.Z. Allen grew up in Southern California and has called Oregon, Las Vegas, and Kansas home. His heroes are named Leonard, Block, Westlake, McBain, and Vachss. He encourages readers to stop by his website at www.dzallen.net.