

# PULP

## DESCRIPTION:

Struggling thriller writer Kevin Turner just received a panicked call from his ex-girlfriend Tina, a self-proclaimed clairvoyant prostitute. One of her clients, the mayor's married son, died in her bed and she needs Kevin's help to dispose of the body. As if Kevin doesn't have enough problems. His current girlfriend is the spouse of the gay woman who signs his meager paycheck, his sixth credit card has hit its limit, he received word that his eight-month wait for his second advance check was being withheld by Gotham Publishing until he made the absurd changes in his manuscript that they wanted, and he just discovered his recently deceased father, who Tina claims she's in contact with, owes ten grand from an internet gambling debt, which Kevin would now have to figure a way to pay. When Kevin discovers Tina's psychotic brother has chopped up the body, and the police are finding the pieces spread across the suburbs, it sets off a chain of events more bizarre and horrifying than the plot of one of Kevin's own novels.

## SAMPLE:

### **Pulp** A Novella

#### **Prologue**

This story is based on fabricated events. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental... or is it?

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **How it all began**

I knew I shouldn't have answered my cell phone. One thing I've learned over the years is when someone calls between the hours of 3:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. it can only mean two things. First, the person at the dialing end is on a ravenous hunt for drugs (presuming you have a reputation for acquiring the stuff, which I don't). Or second; there's trouble, big trouble, and you're going to play a part in resolving it.

## CHAPTER 2

“Spirits...” Tina said, one night while we were in bed together and after I’d noticed the small bottle of Prozac she kept on the bureau still contained all its pills. “Are starved for information about the living. That’s why they talk to me. Not to tell me things about the afterlife but for me to tell them things about mortal life. They miss it, as you can imagine. Death is quite boring compared to the stimuli of existence.”

I laid there staring at the ceiling wondering how I ever got involved with a woman like her. How much my life had changed since we’d met.

Tina had a tough life. When she was eleven, she and her brother Ritchie watched her dad strangled her mom while arguing over who answered first to one of the game show, *Jeopardy’s* questions. Her dad then got his pistol and put a bullet through his head.

For months after, she and Ritchie bounced around different state orphanages, finally ending up in foster care. Her foster parents had problems of their own, alcohol and all kinds of the craziness associated with heavy drinking. They were poor and strict, and mainly housed Tina and Ritchie because the state paid \$335 a month in support for each of them.

By age fifteen, Tina had developed a nasty drug habit and ran away to live on the street. Prostitution, stripping, dealing drugs, it was the only way she could afford her daily bag of heroin. Eventually, she was arrested and brought back to her foster parents who quickly shuffled her away to a mental institution because the state wouldn’t pay for rehab.

Ritchie left the foster house the day he turned eighteen and joined the marines. He returned home after three years of intense fighting in Iraq; being dishonorably discharged for allegedly killing and mutilating a family of Kurds. He quickly became the neighborhood drug kingpin. The times Tina and I visited him he talked how the war was his life and when he got back his life became the war. It still raged within him.

When I met Tina she’d been off drugs for nearly three months. She was living in a dingy hotel room above a Chinese restaurant and dancing topless at a local dive called *Double Visions*. I’d just published my first novel and had used the entire advance on a down payment for a small rancher in the suburbs with nearly three acres of heavily wooded land. I was celebrating the purchase with a night out at a strip club and had paid Tina for a lap dance. It was an unconventional way to meet but the attraction between us was mutual and electrifying. That night I had the best sex of my life in my new house. The next day I asked her to move in with me.

I was in love.

A month into our relationship, Tina got a call from social services that her foster parents had been killed in horrible automobile accident and that she and Ritchie were the sole beneficiaries of their small estate. Tina took her share of the money, moved out of my place, and bought a duplex in a semi-upscale neighborhood a few miles outside of Philadelphia. She told me she wanted to live on her own for a while even if we did end up moving back in together. I hated the thought of her not being with me but accepted the fact that she wanted her own space.

Ritchie took up residence in their foster parent's house and turned it into Grand Central Station for his drug dealing empire.

Four months into our relationship is when I noticed Tina had stopped taking her medication. Her body was in picturesque health but her mind was a shattered mess. Her mental illness was frightening. I'd wake up at her house in the middle of the night to the sound of her blabbering incoherently to the ceiling with drool leaking from the side of her mouth and her eyes wrapped up in her sockets like a woman possessed.

She told me two spirits lived through her, burlesque dancers from the 1920's who were raped and killed by a serial murderer. These spirits wanted her to go back to stripping at the club so they could re-experience the excitement that was taken from them. I forbade it, though my novel had flopped terribly, barely earning back its advance, and my financial situation was in no state to support two households. The tiny articles I wrote in the garden section of the local newspaper for \$125 bucks a week paid my basics. But that's it.

A few nights later, I discovered to my horror that Tina had begun hooking again and one of her clients was the principle of a local high school. She and I had a tremendous fight and said horrible things to each other; words once spoken that we could never take back. And just like that our golden balloon of love popped.

We talked one more time on the telephone after that heart-wrenching night. I warned her that she was heading for trouble screwing around with prominent, married men, but she'd brushed off my concerns, chiding; "You're just jealous."

I assured her I was not, wished her well, and said goodbye. It was painful, but in my mind she was out of my life forever. Deleted from the contacts list in my cell phone.

Gone!

Then tonight's frantic call. "Lance Starkey's dead! Lance Starkey's dead! Please come over!"

The sheer unexpectedness of Tina's shrill, near hysterical voice rattled me into action. Without thinking about what I was doing, I left Jen asleep in my bed, threw on my jacket, hopped into my 1997 Nissan Sentra, and cruised down I-95 toward the Manayunk section of Philadelphia. Something I had sworn I would never do again.

Concern. Hope. Dread. Guilt. Love?

Emotions poured through me as I pulled off the interstate, turned onto POLK STREET, and headed into Tina's development. I spotted a blue Jaguar XJS parked alongside the alley. I stopped in front of her house, shut off the ignition, and listened to the plinking of the cooling engine. The September night was black and moonless and tinged with a winter-like chill.

I sighed deeply and stared at her front door.

*Do I really need another complication in my life?*

I was already having an affair with the married, bi-sexual spouse of the gay woman who signed my meager paycheck. My sixth credit card had hit its limit. I received word that my eight-month wait for my second advance check was being withheld by Gotham Publishing until I made the absurd changes they wanted in my second manuscript. And I'd just discovered my recently deceased father owed ten grand from an internet gambling debt, which I'd now have to figure a way to pay.

Craving for a cigarette prickled through me. I reached into the ashtray and fished an old butt from the disgusting mishmash of filters, chewed nicotine gum, and ashes. The butt looked like a twisted worm. I lit the frayed end and dragged deep; my first drag in a week. I held in the smoke and felt a dizzying rush of nicotine jet through my system and relax my state of mind.

“Kevin!” a voice called.

I turned my head.

It took a moment for my eyes to grow accustomed to the glow of the porch light, but when they did, I saw Tina’s slender figure wearing just her underwear. Her hourglass hips curved underneath the fabric of her white panties. Her breasts swelled against her bra. Corkscrews of golden hair rippled in disarray down her shoulders and over her petite, seraphic face.

My stomach somersaulted. I’d forgotten how beautiful she was.

She stepped toward me.

She looked worried.

She looked vulnerable.

She looked like a toy built for sex.

*Do I really need another complication in my life?*

I crushed the butt, opened the door, and unfolded from my car; feeling as if I were about to get involved in something that could possibly ruin me.

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Tina ran up and embraced me the way a child embraces a parent coming to pick them up after spending a long summer away at camp; a tight, clinging squeeze. Perfume hit my nose. The warmth of her body quickly consumed my apprehensions. We stood mute in the awkward silence and the unspoken tensions of ex-lovers meeting after a long time apart.

She released and stepped back. Anxiety showed in the wideness of her eyes.

“Thank God you’re here!” she said. “I didn’t know what to do! I didn’t know who else to call!”

“Where’s your clothes?” I asked.

“Oh, Jesus!” She pursed her lips and rubbed her arms. “I’m so frazzled. I ran out as soon as I saw your car pull up. I’m surprised you came.”

I took off my jacket to give to her. “Me too.”

She draped my jacket over her shoulders, shivered, and started up the walkway. I followed. We stepped to the door. I reached out and jiggled the handle.

“It’s locked,” I said, and twisted again for certainty.

“Locked?” Her dumbfounded expression caught the porch light. “It can’t be!”

“It is.”

“I don’t have the key!”

“Any neighbors got a spare?”

She crossed her arms and huddled my coat around her. “My neighbors abhor me.”

“I’ll call a locksmith? I have my cell.”

“Just break the window above the lock. Ritchie got me in that way before.”

“I’ll call a twenty-four hour locksmith. It won’t take long.”

“There’s a dead body in the house! I don’t want anyone here! Got it? Break the damn window please, so we can go inside.”

I straightened my shoulders, aggravated by her brashness. “Sure.”

I turned my attention to the four small windowpanes rising vertically above the door handle.

“You got a brick?”

“Use your elbow. That’s how Ritchie did it. Bunch up your shirt sleeve and smash it.”

I did as she said and knocked my elbow against the pane. It bounced off.

“Harder,” she urged. “I’m freezing!”

I did it again with the same result.

“What is this?” I asked. “Bullet-proof glass?”

“C’mon,” she replied. “Put some muscle into it. Ritchie did it with one blow.”

I looked at her; so vulnerable, nearly nude, and wearing my jacket. Desire fired and flowed through my veins. I fought against my passion for her. Thought about the times she lied to me and the pain of discovering the truth of what was going on. The betrayal. The absolute hate of deceit.

I whipped my elbow and smashed with all my might. Simultaneously, I heard the tinkling of falling glass and felt a stinging burn along my forearm. I grabbed where the pain came.

“Dammit!” I spat.

“What happened?”

“I’m cut!”

“Bad?”

Warm blood soaked through the fabric of my shirt and wetted my fingers. “Feels it.”

“Unlock the door,” she said. “I’ll take a look inside.”

I reached through the pane, careful not to brush against the toothy shards, twisted the lock, opened the door, and stepped inside. The house was as I remembered, spacious and clean, with large comfortable furniture and the perfect amount of lighting. Plastic plants interspersed with live ones hung from the windows. A large oriental rug covered half the carpeted floor. Pictures of her and Ritchie as kids adorned the walls. I noticed a picture of me. And then another.

She went quickly to the bathroom and came out wearing a pink robe and carrying a packet of gauze and bandage tape.

“Let me see,” she said.

I unbuttoned my shirt and peeled the sticky, soppy fabric from the wound. Blood dripped to the floor and soaked into the carpet. She reached out and sought my arm.

“It’s pretty deep,” she said, and compressed a wad of bandages. I bit my lip against the pain. “You should get it stitched.”

“I don’t have insurance.”

“I’ll pay the bill.”

I shook my head. “I don’t want your charity.”

She shrugged. “Suit yourself. But there’s probably gonna be a scar.”

I pulled the bandages away to see about the bleeding and unintentionally started a new flow. Bright red drops splattered. Tina reached for more gauze and taped a fresh wad to my skin.

“How’s that feel?” she asked, as she finished her patch job.

I flexed, stretched, and massaged the area around the wound. "Pretty good."

She walked to a cabinet, took out a wine glass and an opener, and uncorked a bottle of merlot. Her hand shook a little as she poured the liquid nearly to the rim.

I looked at her sternly. "What happened with Lance Starkey?"

She sighed. "I don't know. One minute I was um... you know, doing what I do, and the next Starkey lets out this little gasp... and then, that's it. He stops moving. I checked his chest and he wasn't breathing. What am I going to do? It's Lance Starkey! I'm in so much trouble!"

"Calm down," I said. "Were you two doing anything illegal?"

"You mean like drugs?" She turned her arms underside up to expose the pale, delicate flesh. "Of course not! I've been clean for two years!"

"He probably had a heart attack. Don't worry about it. It's not your fault."

"It doesn't matter what the cause! Don't you get it? I can see the headline now; *Son of Mayor Gerald Starkey found dead in the bed of a hooker*. I can't handle that kind of publicity! I've gotta get him out of here! I've gotta get him out of here now!"

I clasped her shoulders. "You need to calm down. This isn't a big a deal. People die from natural causes every day. Everything'll be fine. Trust me. The mayor doesn't know who you are or what you do. He'll be so embarrassed by his son's affair that he'll keep the whole story hush. You'll see. We'll call an ambulance and when the paramedics get here just pretend like you actually really cared about the guy."

She snickered at my sarcasm.