

BuckThirsty

by Robert Burton Robinson



GENRE: Suspense/Crime. LENGTH: 2,128 words. SYNOPSIS: Some people will do *anything* for a buck. You might call them *buck-thirsty*.

Travis and Tara were thirtysomethings who lived in an affluent suburb. Travis spent most of his time on the road. But when he did come home to his live-in girlfriend, he brought major cash.

Tara loved cash. She even loved Travis—as much as a woman like her was capable of loving a man.

Sometimes she wondered exactly what kind of work her boyfriend did to make all that money. But she didn't have time to think about it too much, since she was so busy shopping and hanging out with friends.

Tara ran to greet him at the front door. “Have a good week?”

“Yep. I’ve got another satisfied client.”

“Great, Honey. Where are we going for dinner? I’m craving a big, juicy steak.”

“Oh, Sweetie—I’m kinda tired. Couldn’t we just stay in and order a pizza?”

Tara pretended to be hurt. “Well, I guess so.”

“I need to make a few business calls.”

“Okay. No problem.”

“Thanks, Baby.” He kissed her on the forehead and then walked toward his study.

“Pepperoni or Meat Lover’s?” She reached into to her pocket for her cell phone.

“Pepperoni’s fine.”

After Tara had ordered the pizza, she went to the study. The door was closed, as usual. Months earlier Travis had sound-proofed the room—ostensibly to shut out the noise from the living room TV.

She hated it. What was he doing in there? What was he hiding? She often wondered if he might be having an affair. It would be easy. In fact, he *could* have a girlfriend in every city he did business in. How would she know?

Not that she cared so much about fidelity. That was not the issue. Her concern was that he might dump her for another woman. That would mean no more country club, no more shopping sprees, no more...*anything*. She would be broke—out on the streets.

In the ten years since college, she had never made use of her business degree. And she wouldn't be able to get the kind of job she needed to support her lavish lifestyle. Her skills were more valuable in the bedroom than in the boardroom.

Tara hurried to the bedroom, reached into her dresser to the back of her panties drawer. She grabbed the device she had recently purchased from a website. It was an electronic stethoscope for listening through walls and doors.

She hid it behind her back as she walked quietly to his study. The door was still closed. Her heart began to race as she put on the headphones and placed the diaphragm against the door. She turned up the volume until she could hear him talking.

“...watched her strip. She walked around the room for a while, naked. She had a very sexy body, Man. And even though she didn't know I was watching—it was like she was teasing me. Finally, she got into to bed and turned off the light. I let her doze off for a few minutes. Then I nailed her.”

Tara gasped. Then she quickly covered her mouth. Had he heard her? She tiptoed to the bedroom and put the device back in its hiding place and closed the drawer. When she

turned around, Travis was standing in the doorway. She jumped.

“You okay?” He seemed genuinely concerned.

“Uh, yeah. Sure.”

“Well, I’m starving for that pizza. Hope you ordered an extra large.”

“Of course.”

He took off his suit coat and laid it on the bed. Then he walked over to Tara and took her in his arms. “And later I’m going to be starving for something else.” He slid his hands down to her butt and pulled her against himself.

“Yeah, Baby. Can’t wait.” She smiled, but wondered if her smile looked forced.

On Monday morning, as soon as Travis had left for the airport, Tara put on a provocative outfit and drove into town to visit John, Travis’ attorney.

John gave Tara the once over as she walked into his office. The outfit is working, she thought. She wasn’t ‘smoking hot’ anymore, but she was still sexier than just about anything else walking down the street.

“So, what can I do for you, Tara?”

Judging by the way he was eyeing her chest, she knew exactly what he *wanted* to do for her. And if she were available, she just might *let* him do it.

“Before I get to that...just out of curiosity...has Travis made any changes to his will lately?”

“No. Why?”

She smiled. “Oh, you know me. I always worry about things.”

“You’ve got nothing to be concerned about, Tara. Travis loves you very much.”

“I know.” She paused. “The reason I’m here today is that I have this friend...”

“Yes?”

“Actually, she’s a friend of a friend. And she’s got an abusive husband. She’s called the police several times. But he’s got buddies on the force, and they won’t do anything. So, she just wants to get out.”

“I see. But you realize I’m not a divorce attorney.”

“Yes, I know. She can’t divorce him anyway. He says that if she tries to leave him, he’ll hunt her down like a dog and rip her heart out.”

“Sounds like a rough customer.”

“Yeah. And I just thought you might know of somebody who could...”

“What?”

“Somebody who could *take care* of the guy.”

John frowned. “Hold it. You really think I would be involved with people like that?” He stood up and walked to the side of his desk, ready to escort her out. “I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

Tara stood and stepped in close to him. She placed her hand on his arm and looked up into his eyes. “Please, John. I apologize for even asking for your help—but I don’t know where else to turn. And this woman is desperate. That creep of a husband could kill her this very day.”

John shook his head.

“Surely you can give me some idea where to go for help.”

“Well...I do know this lawyer. I take that back. I don’t really *know* him—I know *of* him. He handed me his card at a conference. I don’t know how he even got into the place. He practices out of his car, I think. Let me see,” he said, walking around to his desk, checking his computer. After a few mouse clicks, he said, “Here it is.” He read the name and phone number aloud as Tara wrote it down on a scrap of paper from her purse. “I don’t know whether he’ll have any useful advice for you, but you can give him a try.”

“Thanks, John.”

He led her to the door. “And don’t tell anybody I gave you his name. I don’t want to be associated with that scumbag in any way.”

Tara drove around for twenty minutes before spotting a pay phone.

“Hello. Is this Mr. Johnson?”

“Yes, Ma’am. Attorney at law—at your service.”

“Somebody gave me your number. I don’t remember who.” She went on to explain about the problem her friend of a friend was having.

He put her off at first, but after some pleading he finally relented, and gave her a phone number.

“What’s his name?”

The line went dead.

She called the number.

“I’m sorry—I don’t know your name, but a man gave me your number and—“

“—what’s the job?” the man said coldly.

It was a very deep voice—almost too low to be real, thought Tara. Perhaps he was altering his voice electronically. She didn’t care—as long as he could give her what she needed.

“It’s my husband.” She gave him their address and told him when to do it: Friday night.

When Travis got home on Friday night, Tara had a lovely, romantic dinner waiting for him. Later she made passionate love to him. When they were done, she got up and went to the kitchen for her after-sex ice cream. Sure—it was mega calories. But still, it was much healthier than her old after-sex *cigarette* habit.

Travis was beginning to doze off when she walked back into the bedroom. “We’re out of ice cream.”

He didn’t budge.

“Honey?” She shook him gently. “Honey, wake up. We’re out of ice cream.”

“I’m tired. Please just let me sleep.” He rolled away from her.

She shook him harder. “Please, Baby. You know I’ve got to have my ice cream.”

Travis began to snore.

“Honey! If I have to go out, I’m gonna buy a carton of *cigarettes*.”

“Oh, alright.” He forced himself to get up and get dressed.

As he was walking out the front door, she said, “Thank you so much, Baby. You’re so sweet.”

It's done, she thought. Travis would never be back with the ice cream.

Tara went into the bedroom and sprawled out across the bed. She was going to be rich. She'd finally have her *own* money. She fantasized about all the things she was going to buy.

Tara was expecting a call from the police at any minute. But instead, she heard somebody coming in the front door. She checked the clock on the nightstand. It had been thirty minutes since Travis left. No sooner than she got up from the bed, he walked in.

"Surprised to see me?"

"Uh, no. But what took you so long?"

"Didn't you expect me to take a lot *longer*? As in *forever*?"

"What do you mean, Honey? I was worried about you."

"Really? Then why didn't you try calling my cell phone?"

"I don't know..."

"I know why."

Tara had a sinking feeling.

"It's because you thought I was dead!"

“What? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You didn’t think John would tell me?”

It was no use denying it anymore. “I’m sorry. I don’t know what I was thinking. I must be sick or something. Maybe I need to see a psychiatrist. Yeah, that must be it. I need help.”

“After all I’ve done for you.”

“Well, don’t act like you’re Mr. Perfect. I overheard you talking about a woman you were with.”

“What?”

“Last Friday night—you were in your study. I heard you say she was walking around naked and then after she went to sleep you nailed her!”

“So, you thought I had sex with her.”

“And you’re going to stand there and tell me you *didn’t*?”

“That’s *exactly* what I’m telling you.” He reached around to his back to get something.

“So, you’re just going to explain away the fact that you *nailed* her?”

“I nailed her with this.” It was a large pistol. He reached into his left pants pocket to retrieve the suppressor, and attached it to the end of the barrel.

“What are you doing?” Tara held her hands up, as though they could deflect the bullets.

“I’m doing what do I do for a living?”

“You told me you were in sales.”

“You didn’t care what I was doing—as long as I brought home the money.” He aimed.

“Wait! Who was that lawyer I called—that Mr. Johnson. Was that *you*?”

Travis grinned slyly. “Yep. Pretty convincing accent, huh? The hit man was me too. Oh, and by the way—John is the one who sets up jobs for me.”

“No wonder he called you.”

“Yeah. His legal practice is just a front. He’s my pimp. And I’m one of his girls.”

“You’re *good*, Honey.” She smiled sweetly. “Of course, I’ve always known that about you. You excel at everything you do.”

“Thanks.” He lowered the gun slightly. Could he really kill this woman that he loved? He had been deeply hurt when he found out she wanted him dead. But now he knew it was because she was jealous. She didn’t want to lose him. Sure—she didn’t want to lose his *money* either. But now that he realized there was no other man involved...

“Please, Honey.”

He put the gun back under his belt. "I'll give you a few days to get moved out. Take anything you want."

"Thanks," she said, relieved.

When he reached the front door, he heard gunfire behind him. A bullet hit him in the leg. He spun around, whipping his pistol out as two shots caught him in the chest.

He returned fire with a single bullet, surgically placed right between her eyes. She was brain-dead before she hit the floor. Who did she think she was messing with? *He* was a professional.

But her *lucky* shots would prove just as deadly as his professional one.

Travis lay on the stone floor of the foyer oozing blood, unable to move, trying desperately to stay alive...as his mind faded to black.

THE END

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