

Money Shot

by

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1.

Coming back from the dead isn't as easy as they make it seem in the movies. In real life it takes forever to do little things like pry open your eyes. You spend excruciating ages trying to bend your left middle finger down far enough to feel the rope around your wrists. Even longer figuring out that the cold hard thing poking you in the cheek is one of the handles of a pair of jumper cables. This is not the kind of action that makes for gripping cinema. Plus there are these long dull stretches where people in the audience would probably go take a piss or get popcorn, since it looks as if nothing is happening and they figure maybe you really are dead after all. After a while, you start to wonder the same thing yourself. You also wonder what will happen if you throw up behind the oily rag duct-taped into your mouth or how long it will take for someone to notice you're missing. Otherwise you are mostly busy bleeding, trying not to pass back out, or laboriously adding up the cables, the stuffy cramped darkness, the scratchy carpet below and the raw hollow metal above to equal your current location, the trunk of an old and badly maintained car. That's what it was like for me, anyway.

I'm sure you're wondering what a nice girl like me was doing left for dead in the trunk of a piece of shit Honda

Civic out in the industrial wasteland east of downtown Los Angeles. Or maybe we've met before and you're wondering why it hadn't happened sooner.

My name's Gina Moretti, but you probably know me as Angel Dare. Don't worry, I won't tell your wife. I made my first adult video when I was twenty, though I lied on camera and said I was eighteen. It was volume one of Marco Pole's now-famous amateur line, *Brand Spankin' New*. My scene was just one of five but there's no question that I stole the show. What can I say? I know where my strengths lie. I had a contract with Vixen Video less than two weeks later and before I knew it I was on the Playboy Channel doing soft-focus video centerfold segments for more money than I earned in a year back home. A porno Cinderella story, but unlike so many of the girls I worked with, I was smart enough to stay off drugs, save every penny, and get out before my pussy turned back into a pumpkin.

Problem was, I just couldn't stay retired. Like a pro wrestler or a jewel thief, I was a sucker for an encore. I had no idea when I said yes to Sam Hammer that I'd end up stuffed in a trunk.

Sam's an old friend. One of the few genuine good guys left in the biz. Kind of a cross between Santa Claus and John Holmes. He must have been pushing sixty, burly and cheerful with a silver ponytail and neatly groomed beard. He was the kind of guy that always had a sofa to crash on or a shoulder to cry on, a loan till your next check or a guy he

knew who would fix your toilet for cheap. I'd say he was like a father to me, but that would sound kind of weird since we did a few scenes together, back before he started working exclusively behind the camera. Never mind how long ago. He had been a perfect gentleman too, easygoing, respectful and reliable as clockwork. No easy feat before Viagra became the backbone of the industry, so to speak. Back when you actually had to count on feminine wiles to make the trains run on time, a man like Sam who could stand and deliver on cue was worth his weight in gold. Now you have guys popping Viagra and Cialis like tic tacs and shooting Caverject directly into the equipment to get things up and running. Better loving through chemistry.

Sam Hammer shoots were always a blast. No pressure. Sam was married to all-natural triple-D legend Busti Keaton, star of the *Topsy Turvy* series and *Battlestar Gazongas*. She would cook huge amounts of the best down-home comfort food and fuss around the set making sure nobody was too hot or too cold or uncomfortable in any way. I've been on plenty of jobs that were just jobs, or worse. Hammer shoots never felt like work. More like big happy Sunday barbeques where they just happened to be filming people having sex.

Sam could have easily made the jump to Hollywood. He had a great eye for composition and wrote witty, original scripts that actually kept your finger off the fast forward button. But we all knew that he would never leave the Valley. Sam was a lifer. He liked being around naked girls

way too much to go legit. So many smut directors are nothing but jaded hacks who spend most of the shoot snorting lines or talking on their cell phones, but not Sam. His enthusiasm was infectious.

When he called, I was having one of those days. Those sneaking-up-on-forty days when I can't stop looking in the mirror. Comparing what I see now to the image of that perfect, flawless little twenty year old bouncing around on top of Marco Pole for digital eternity. I'm in better shape now than I ever was, working out six days a week and kickboxing to knock out stress, but all the crunches in the world can't reverse gravity, or crow's feet, or the fact that I have to use the hair dye that advertises "100% gray coverage!" Don't get me wrong, I've got a pretty iron-clad ego, but I run Daring Angels, a high-class adult modeling agency out in Van Nuys, and being around all those gorgeous nineteen-year-olds sometimes gets to me. Makes a girl feel like yesterday's news.

When Sam called, I was standing in the full-length mirror beside my desk, topless and sideways. I have always been proud of the fact that I never had my tits done. I've seen way too many beautiful women ruined by ghastly, wall-eyed Frankenstein implants. Yet, on that day, I was hefting my assets in the palms of my hands and wondering if maybe they could use a little surgical pick-me-up after all.

I called my receptionist, personal assistant and all-around Mom Friday into my office. Didi was big back in the

*Deep Throat* days, though if you saw her now, you'd never know it. She was fifty-two, five feet even, with a plain, sweet face like your favorite teacher, but underneath that G-rated exterior was an old-school porn veteran who talked about sex like other people talk about the weather. She had a rich, phone-sex purr of a voice and she got asked out on dates nearly every day by the men who called to book girls. More than half of the time she said yes, and though they may have done a double take when she showed up, I doubt any of those guys were sorry by the end of the night. Didi was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I don't even want to think about how I would have run *Daring Angels* without her.

She came in the door with her sparkly vinyl purse on one arm and the other arm sliding into the sleeve of her pink leather jacket.

"What's up, boss?" she said. "I'm just out the door. Got a hot one lined up tonight." She looked down at my exposed breasts and rolled her eyes. "Would you stop it already! You do *not* need a goddamn boob job."

I grinned. "Go on, Didi. I'll see you tomorrow."

She blew me a kiss and split. I turned back to the mirror. I knew she was right, but still...

When I heard my phone's electronic chirp, I jumped a little, feeling like I'd been busted somehow.

"*Daring Angels*," I said.

"Angel, baby." Just hearing Sam's familiar growl was enough to cheer me up. "How you doing, beautiful?"

"Never better," I replied, turning away from the mirror and grabbing my push-up bra off the back of my chair. "You?"

"The usual," he said. "You know. Making dirty movies."

"How's Georgie?" I asked, holding the phone between my cheek and shoulder and hooking the bra around my ribs.

Georgie was Busti Keaton's real name. I should have noticed the tight little pause and the pinched tension in his voice as he answered much too quickly.

"Fine, she's real good. Listen, Angel, I got a favor to ask."

"Anything, Sam," I said, turning the bra around and slipping my arms through the straps, settling everything into place. I eyed my reflection. Much better.

"I'm shooting with Jesse Black," Sam told me. "I had a new girl flake on me and we've only got the location for another two hours."

I nodded and leaned over my laptop, calling up my booking calendar.

"Okay," I said scanning the schedule. "Zandora Dior and Kyrie Li are both out of town featuring, but Sirena, Coco Latte and Roxette DuMonde are available or I've got this new kid, Molly May. She's a knockout, a legit redhead -- carpet matches the drapes. Fresh, petite girl-next-door type but she also glammers up real nice. She's only a B-cup, though.

It's not a busty line, is it? Bethany Sweet is my only current double-D and she's booked today."

"Actually," Sam said. "Jesse asked for you."

"Come on," I said, laughing nervously and turning back toward the treacherous mirror. "Sam, you know I'm retired."

"Angel, please, I really need your help on this. Jesse is threatening to walk out on me and I promised him I'd get him any girl he wanted. He wants Angel Dare. He says he cut his teeth on your movies, that you were his favorite since he was fifteen."

Now you have to realize that Jesse Black was probably the hottest new male talent in the biz. He was twenty-one, Hollywood handsome and legendary below the belt. The bluest blue eyes. Bad boy smile. More than half the women who who'd come to me looking for work in the past six months said they got into porn specifically because they wanted to work with Jesse Black. Now Jesse Black wanted to work with me.

"It's pretty short notice, Sam," I said, already finding my mind shamelessly wandering over the details of Jesse Black's famous anatomy.

"No anal," Sam replied. "Just a simple little boy/girl scene with a facial pop. I can give you fifteen and a cover. It'll be like old times."

I had to admit it was appealing. It'd be a phone-in, plus Jesse Black, plus helping Sam, plus an easy fifteen hundred bucks and a big fat box cover ego boost. Proof I've

still got it. I could feel my resistance wearing down fast, but I had to keep trying.

"I don't have a current test," I said. "It's been almost seven months."

"You can just fax it in to me by Monday," Sam said. "Look, I'll make it two grand."

"Sam...I..."

"Okay, twenty five, what do you say? I'm in a jam here, Angel. My last three videos tanked and if I screw this one up too, I'll probably get shitcanned from Blue Moon. But with Angel Dare and Jesse Black on the box cover, I got a sure thing."

He was starting to sound desperate. If it had been anyone else, I probably would have held my ground, but Sam had always been there for me whenever I needed anything. No questions asked.

"Okay, Sam," I said. "Jesse knows I'm condom only?"

"Sure," Sam said. "It's no problem. Look, I'll put him on, okay?"

"Wait," I said but it was too late.

"Angel?" a new voice said. "Is this Angel Dare?"

"In the flesh," I said. "This Jesse?"

"Yeah," he replied. "Angel Dare, wow. I can't believe it's really you."

"It's me alright," I said, having no idea what else to say.

"God, you're so hot," he said. "I swear I must've worn out, like, three copies of *Double Dare*. That scene you did with Nina Lynn in the shower." He made a breathy little purring noise. "Damn."

"Thanks," I said, eyeing my reflection again. Back when I shot *Double Dare*, Jesse probably still thought girls were icky. It seemed so wild that a toddler like him would have the hots for me. "You're not so bad yourself, kid."

"Will you do it?" he asked. "Please say you'll do it. It'll be like my best fantasy come true. Me and Angel Dare."

"Well..." I said.

"I'll make it good for you, Angel," he said, voice raw and earnest, like my first boyfriend. "I promise."

"Put Sam back on, okay?" I said.

There was some quick shuffling and then Sam's voice came back on the line.

"Come on, Angel," Sam said. "Make the kid's day. He's gonna start humping me if you don't get here soon."

I sighed and grabbed a pen.

"What's the address?"

2.

The location was one of those sad old mansions in Bel Air. Ostentatious, but had seen better days. Money is so fickle here in L.A. and a big old house is like an aging mistress with a plastic surgery fetish. It's more economical to just buy a cheap, flashy new one than keep on renovating the old one. Otherwise, you wind up renting the place out for porn shoots just to break even on the roofing bills.

There was a pair of twisted pomegranate trees guarding the open gate and the ground beneath them was gory with broken crimson fruit that crunched and splattered under the wheels of my little black Mini. Pulling into the wide circular driveway, I kept expecting to spot Norma Desmond burying her pet chimpanzee in the overgrown rose garden. I felt better once I saw Sam's red '84 Corvette with its vanity plates that read HAMRXXX. It was parked near a massive wooden door that looked like it ought to open into a medieval Spanish dungeon. I parked behind Sam and got my old shoot bag off the passenger seat. There were a few other cars I didn't recognize in front of Sam's, a generic mid-sized rental and a tricked out, over-the-top black Ferrari that had to be Jesse's. Car like that just screamed dick-for-hire. Parked directly in front of the Ferrari was the battered blue Honda Civic with which I would soon become so intimately familiar.

I've spent a lot of time since then going over and over those short minutes in the driveway, wondering why I didn't sense something wrong, why I just waltzed right in like some barely legal bimbo from Indiana. I try to tell myself it was because I trusted Sam, because he was my friend for nearly twenty years, but if I'm honest I have to admit that was only part of it. The simple truth is, I had a girl boner. All the blood had run out of my brain and down between my legs. I'd had this semi-regular thing with a rockabilly bass player that had lasted nearly six months, but it had recently gotten stale and predictable and I'd decided it was time to move on. It had been nearly three weeks since I'd gotten any new action. Now I found myself in a ditzy hormonal fog, gone blonde at the thought of putting Jesse Black's lean, hard, twenty-one-year-old body through its paces. So I walked, crotch-first, right into a trap.

The wheels of my little roller suitcase bumped along over the cracked pavement and the lonely echoing sound seemed way too loud in the deserted courtyard. The door wasn't locked. I thought they might be shooting some dialog or pick-up footage so I didn't knock. I just slipped quietly inside.

The first thing I noticed was that there was no furniture. It was a huge, hollow room with a cathedral ceiling, Spanish tile floors and a massive iron chandelier on a chain that looked like something Zorro would use to swing over the heads of the bad guys. There were several

large windows, but they were covered with opaque plastic, letting in only a soft, muted fraction of the afternoon sun. It smelled like fresh paint.

"Angel?" Sam's voice called from the top of an elegant, curving staircase. "That you?"

"Yeah," I replied, squinting up the stairs.

"We're up here," Sam said.

I pushed down the telescoping handle on my case and hefted it to carry it up the stairs. Luckily, it was just the small shoot bag and nearly empty. Sam said I'd only need lingerie and heels so I had run by the house on my way over and thrown together a couple of sets and stockings to give him some options. It's been years since I had my shoot bags packed and ready all the time, everything organized into neatly labeled Ziploc bags and categorized with titles like *fetish*, *slut* or *GND*, which stood for Girl Next Door.

"Sam?" I called when I got to the top of the steps.

"Come on in." Sam's voice came from the far end of a long hallway.

There was a partially open door with a bright light inside and I walked toward it. There were no fat yellow cords duct-taped to the floor, no adjacent rooms full of giggling girls powdering their implant scars and gluing on false eyelashes. There was no one hanging around smoking or talking on a cell phone. Just that long empty hallway. I like to think I was starting to wonder a little at that

point, but I didn't leave. I just pushed the door the rest of the way open and went right in.

The room at the end of the hall was mostly empty, except for a large wrought-iron bed with a bare mattress covered in plastic. Sam stood against the far wall, beside an empty fireplace. There were two other men I didn't recognize, but I didn't get much of a look at them because Jesse was right by the door looking delicious, dark hair tousled and blue eyes smoldering, ready to go. He wore leather pants that hung so low on his lean hips that you would have seen his pubic hair if he hadn't shaved it off. His sleek, lanky torso was bare and sheened with sweat that highlighted the symmetrical perfection of every muscle. He stepped up to me, gave me an appreciative once-over and smiled.

"Angel Dare," he said. "Wow. You look amazing. This is gonna be awesome."

He reached down and squeezed his most famous feature through his tight leather pants. Then he punched me in the face.