



Next Stop: Hell.....

RIDING THE EL AT MIDNIGHT

RICK R. REED

RIDING THE EL AT MIDNIGHT

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But in the end, it was Mark who would be the recipient.

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A black leather messenger bag hung at his waist, filled with the usual assortment: a rubber hood with two small holes, a length of clothesline, a roll of duct tape, a thin purple wand that would administer a not-so-gentle electric shock, a butt plug, tit clamps, a small brown-glassed bottle of poppers, a tube of KY Jelly, and a wad of Kleenex.

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Dead End Street

High Risk

Orientation

RIDING THE EL AT MIDNIGHT

BY

RICK R. REED

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RIDING THE EL AT MIDNIGHT
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For midnight adventurers everywhere

RIDING THE EL AT MIDNIGHT

They were out there. Fucking. Making so much noise, he could think of nothing else. Mark moved from the bathroom, where he was applying mascara, to the living room. Stripped naked, his red hair fell in a silken line from head to waist.

In the darkness of the living room, empty save for a swooning couch he had seen and bought one day on a whim, Mark paused to listen. The woman had a throaty little laugh that escaped her each time the man grunted. The sounds were rhythmic and hard-edged: the fucking taking place outside his front door was not gentle. There was pain, intense and being delivered, like beats in a musical composition, steadily every two or three seconds.

Perhaps what was occurring outside was not even an act of

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consensual sex.

Mark grew hard, his dick beginning to juice up as he thought of the woman's terror, her agony.

He crept to the living room window and knelt beneath it, head level with the sill. Lifting the blind silently, he peered into the darkness, yellow tinged from a sodium vapor streetlight.

He liked the "garden" apartment he'd rented because it was below ground, liked it especially because of its entrance, which his visitors were currently putting to good use. To get to Mark's doorway, one had to descend three stairs below street level. His doorway was shrouded in cool, red-brick darkness, even in summer, even in the washed out, bright light of day. His apartment had once been the basement of the two-flat above him. He liked to refer to it as hell.

Outside, the two were going at it with even more abandon. The street light afforded only the dimmest of views, and Mark could make out little more than two shapes, animal, the beast with two backs: he couldn't discern the man or the woman's hair color or even their race.

He knew only that two human beings were copulating outside his front door, the man pinning the woman brutally against the rough concrete wall, her legs splayed on either side of him, suspended by his strength and the force of his cock, driving into her and causing her to no longer laugh, but whisper a tiny "oh" with each thrust.

The scene could not be more delicious, Mark thought, rubbing his cock through his pants, squeezing the head hard

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enough to make him gasp with the pain and the pleasure, feeling his pre-cum wetting his jock as he watched. It could not be a more perfect appetizer to the evening he had planned.

The woman gripped the man's back as the man paused from fucking to light a cigarette. She slid her legs down to the ground, but kept them spread wide. The cigarette's orange glow flashed down, the orange trailing, and the woman cried out as its tip burned into her thighs.

Mark bit his lip and imagined the smell of scorched flesh. "Wonderful," he whispered.

The man leaned back, not enough to pull out of the woman, but enough to burn her breasts, her stomach, her neck. The woman whimpered, an animal caught in a trap, but held her hands tightly on the man's hips, never moving to stop him. He resumed thrusting, faster now, groans and grunts coming in a non-stop stream. The woman's head lashed from side to side as a moan, low at first, picked up speed and volume, until she at last cried out into the darkness...a cry born of agony and, Mark thought, the most delirious pleasure.

The two outside collapsed against one another, covering each other with kisses.

"How sweet," Mark said, rising from the hardwood floor. "Love is in the air."

He rose, lit a cigarette and headed back toward the bathroom to finish getting ready.

* * *

Julio lifted the carnation from the florist's box. "Can you

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dye it maroon?" he had asked the girl behind the counter earlier that afternoon. "I want it to match my tie." Now, holding it close to the burgundy tie, he thought flower and tie a good match. Setting down the flower, Julio whipped the Swiss-dotted, silk tie into a Windsor knot and tightened it. He pinned the carnation to the lapel of his summer-weight suit and admired himself in the mirror.

He was pleased with what smiled back. A man of thirty five, but looking ten years younger, Julio patted dark hair, grateful it wasn't thinning like the hair of so many other men his age. Black with deep blue highlights, he wore it cut short and brushed away from his face. His dark brown eyes and dark skin he had inherited from his Cuban mother; the straight nose, strong jaw line and chiseled cheekbones came from his father, a German. If anything was lacking in his face, it was his lips, which he considered too thin, almost cruel. But the heavy dark moustache, perfectly trimmed, each hair combed and waxed into regulation uniformity, concealed well his thin upper lip.

A small diamond stud sparkled in one ear. Julio was not fond of jewelry, and this was his one concession to self-adornment. The earring was tiny and added just a hint of the dandy to his carefully planned outfit.

Beneath the gray suit, black wing tips were buffed to a high gloss. Gray socks with a small maroon diamond pattern perfectly complemented the shoes.

Julio lit a cigarette. He smoked only for effect, only for the air of sophistication he felt it lent him. It also gave him an

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excuse to carry around an engraved lighter of sterling silver.

He ran the brush through his hair once more, noting how the waves glistened. Perhaps tonight, he would meet someone, someone deserving of his affections.

Decent men were so few these days, so very few. That's why, as his last act, Julio placed the mother-of-pearl-handled switch blade into his inside jacket pocket. Just before tucking it in, he stroked the smooth surface of the knife's handle. The action gave him the oddest pleasure, one that caused him to stiffen in his pants.

He smiled and headed for the door.

* * *

There was something about the heat, which pressed into his basement apartment, a great lethargic beast that made Mark quiver with anticipation. The heat possessed him, making him feel at once languid and erotically charged, surrounding him with a sensual force, like a lover who would not be denied. One who would take without asking, take and take and take.

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* * *

Julio made his way along State Street, toward the Roosevelt Road subway stop. As he walked the run-down street—gutters filled with rusting beer cans, brown paper sacks, and the detritus of fast food restaurants—Julio imagined quite another scene: a young man, impossibly handsome, on his way to a late night summer’s rendezvous. Gone were the boarded-up storefronts, imprisoned in fencing that slid across their windows and doors each night. Julio saw only maples and oaks, their leaves shifting restlessly in tepid breezes, a clean, wide boulevard and himself, stopping at a street vendor to buy a pink carnation.

The flower he would bestow on a gentleman tonight. Perhaps he would find one who would truly deserve it. If he failed to find a gentleman, the carnation could be given as some sort of consolation for the misery his sins must cause him. Julio chastised himself: why, the evening was just

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beginning and here he was, already being pessimistic.

Julio headed down subway stairs, heels clicking with staccato rhythm on the concrete, echoing off tile walls.

A subway train, approaching, rumbled in the tunnel like a beast heading rapidly and inevitably toward its prey.

Julio sniffed the carnation, and with his other hand, fingered the knife in his pocket, thoughts of love, beauty and retribution mingling in his mind.

* * *

Mark boarded a northbound el train at Addison. He chose the northbound line because there were fewer passengers than trains going south, toward the city and its plastic pleasures.

He could feel their gaze upon him as the doors slid open and Mark boarded. He despised the bright and soulless lighting favored by the Chicago Transit Authority. The light sought him out, a creature under a rock, exposing, exploring, merciless.

He walked to the back of the car, head held high, but searching, hoping that the “one” had already boarded the train, a man who would devour him with his gaze, eat him up like a piece of overly ripe fruit, dripping and too sweet. Mark wanted a man with a refined look, but with the heart of a beast.

Nothing. An old woman with frizzy bleached hair sat mumbling to herself, digging in a torn bag from Aldi. Farther back a black woman sat, holding a little girl with pigtails to her breast. Mark thought the woman looked at him with envy.

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Mark sat at the very back of the car, crossing his legs to force his basket upward, protuberant.

How long would it be? he wondered. How long before the car emptied of all save the man who would bring him his pleasure, handing it up to him selfishly and with cruelty, perhaps not even realizing how selfless and giving he was being.

At the next stop, the bag lady type lumbered off the car, almost losing her footing as she stepped onto the platform.

No one else got on, but just as Mark was making himself hard with a memory at once painful and exquisite (Daddy enters the room, the paddle with the holes in it swinging in his hands like an animal. Mark lowers his flannel pajama bottoms and assumes the position, all fours, ass in the air; whistle of paddle through the air and then a satisfying *thwack* as the smooth wood made contact with adolescent flesh) the door at the back of the car opened.

And he was there. Refined, perfect. Black hair, wearing a gray suit and maroon tie, smelling of cologne, tobacco, and chewing gum.

Fantasy come to life.

* * *

Julio arranged himself into a seat. Across from him sat a man beyond description. He knew he shouldn't be looking at him, yet the audacity of this creature across from him kept drawing his eyes back, to catalog the heights of depravity this man reached. Black leather and silver, truly a creature of the

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night, a twenty dollar whore or, worse, one who gave it away for free, a passport to shoring up his flagging self esteem.

In an instant, Julio forgot the gentleman he hoped to meet; this one caused him to seethe with such rage.

The carnation trembled in his hand.

* * *

He was looking at him! Mark knew he would be unable to resist his lure for long. Mark could see the dark-haired man trying to look away at the oily night pressing up against the windows, but like a magnet, Mark impelled the brown eyes back.

And what eyes! So dark the pupils were lost among the iris, so dark their depths could only be imagined.

And Mark imagined the depths of depravity to which he could bring him.

He swung his red hair over one shoulder and sat up straighter, stiffening his spine so his pecs took on more definition, more bulk. He stuck one finger in his mouth and sucked, sliding his eyes toward him: bad little boy. When their gazes met and locked for an instant, Mark pulled his stare away and snickered.

* * *

He should really just get up and move to another car. The guy was turning his stomach. What type of home must have spawned him? It was a pity, but couldn't the slut see what he

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had made of himself? Couldn't he feel the same hatred churning inside him at this very moment when he looked in the mirror and saw the sacrilege he had perpetrated on himself?

The el car stopped and discharged the last two passengers, adolescent males who prayed to gods of marijuana and beer. No one else got on.

They were alone.

* * *

It was time to make his move. Mark moistened his lips and bit them. He stood.

* * *

God! He's coming this way. Julio moved over in his seat, denying him access, yet the roiling in his stomach made a lie of this action. He wanted him near, wanted him to do, in fact, just what he was doing, which was sliding over him to get to the seat near the window, swinging the too-toned and shaved chest in his face, choking him with the perfume he wore: roses and sweat, combined to nauseate, to intoxicate.

* * *

"Hi," Mark said, flashing the gaze of a petulant little boy (*don't think, don't think, don't think...now about where you learned it*). It worked with all the magic of a talisman,

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irresistible.

He looked over at him, dark eyes hungry, taking in every inch. And said nothing.

“I’m Mark.”

“Julio.” Turned to once again look out the window, immersed in the north side high-rises bordering Lake Michigan.

Mark laid one hand on his leg, feeling the taut muscles beneath the gabardine grow tauter with his touch.

Julio lifted Mark’s hand and placed it back in his lap. Tolerant smile, condescending.

Good. Daddy’s bad boy requires punishment.

Mark didn’t miss how Julio’s hand brushed his nipple when he returned it to his lap. His nipples hardened, spiraled outward, pulling the chain tighter, blooming like irises.

* * *

This one was really asking for it! No subtlety in his approach. Rage seethed within Julio and he knew Mark could see none of it. Julio was an expert at concealing it.

At least until it was too late...

This filthy creature was the type who liked punishment, Julio could tell. And with a good cause.

He would give him what he wanted.

He turned and smiled, lighting up the tawdry car with perfect white teeth.

* * *

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Mark knew it would take so very little to win him over. Julio's smile confirmed the electric charge Mark had felt the moment he met his dark-eyed gaze.

"The front of the car." Mark nodded toward it, indicating Julio should look up ahead. "There's a somewhat private little booth up there, walled off."

Julio nodded.

"Across from where the conductor would sit if this were the first car. See it?"

Julio smiled and whispered, "Yes," the s at the end coming out sibilant, a hiss.

"Go there with me?"

* * *

So the whore wanted something in public. He truly was filth.

Where had all the gentleman disappeared to?

"I'll follow you," Julio whispered in his ear, careful not to get too close. Who knew what germs that ear harbored?

He watched as the whore stood and headed toward the front of the car.

The whore reached the closed-off space and disappeared inside. Julio could see his tense glance through the small window...waiting, perhaps uncertain if he would meet his dare.

* * *

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Julio hoisted himself up, grabbing the metal bar at the seat's top for support. The world around him dulled as he made his way to the front: black sky and high, stacked points of light moving by on either side of the car vanished.

All that remained was the whore...and the lulling, rhythmic movement of the train.

The whore was insane. The little compartment showed him a depraved animal in captivity. Already the leather and chains were on the floor.

Turning back to him, the whore gazed with heavy-lidded eyes: snake in the sun, serpent.

Dull light filtered into the tiny compartment, revealing him, wearing nothing but body jewelry and a black leather jock strap studded with silver spikes. Julio lit another cigarette, watching, waiting for the rage to ebb. He needed control.

"Hurry," the whore mouthed, hands moving over the expanse of chest and belly, skin that looked flat: gray meat in the half light.

He entered. The small compartment stunk of the whore. Julio drew in on his cigarette, ember glowing bright.

* * *

Now the time has come to show him what I need. Mark dropped to his knees, floor gritty beneath him, eyes upraised in supplication.

Somewhere, like a dream, a garbled voice announced the next stop. If anyone got on, it wouldn't matter.

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He was too far gone to stop.

Tentatively, Mark reached for the guy's zipper.

And he slapped his hand away. Sharp and stinging, making his hand burn.

Good. Very good.

He reached again.

This time, the guy snatched Mark's hand out of the air, splaying the fingers apart and back, to the point of breaking.

No words. Just a warning shake of the head.

Delightful. Pre-cum began to drip, wetting the leather against Mark's groin.

"I've been bad," Mark whimpered.

* * *

So that was it. Julio dragged deep on his cigarette and flung it to the floor, where it smoldered near the whore's ankle. He wanted it rough. It was a game.

The stakes in this game would be higher than the whore thought. A grin flitted across Julio's perfect features.

"So very bad." His voice husky, the whore emptied the contents of a leather pouch on the seat next to him.

Julio shook his head. Such a slut.

* * *

Mark trembled with need. He couldn't hand the guy the rope, or the hood or any of the toys he had brought.

The man had to do that. He had to be in charge.

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Mark leaned forward, taking the man's fingers in his mouth, too suddenly for him to do anything to stop him. Swirling his spit around them, moving his head back and forth, swirling his tongue.

Then bit. Hard.

The man yanked his hand away; the perfect composure of his face faltering for an instant.

Mark locked eyes with him. "Punish me."

* * *

Yes. Yes, he would. Julio picked up the rope. "Stand," he said, putting little volume behind the words but plenty of malice, making sure they were commands to be obeyed.

The whore did as he was told. A student of compliance, he faced away, hands behind back.

He whipped the clothesline around the whore's wrists, again and again, knotting it and pulling it taut enough to cause white cuffs to appear on the wrists above the rope. Julio repeated the procedure around the whore's ankles.

Lifting the hood, Julio slid it over the whore's face, obliterating the luridly handsome features and the sick touches of make-up no real man would ever wear. Before Julio lowered the hood, the whore asked for a hit of poppers.

He denied him.

The whore didn't argue. The hood slid over the whore's head, bright contrast to red hair. Julio laced it up at the back of his neck, pulling hard enough to make him gasp.

Julio knew the whore prayed he would use some of the

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other vile devices littering the seat beside him.

But Julio had only one device to use.

* * *

Mark's world vanished into blackness. All he could smell was rubber. All he could feel were *his* hands, gripping his hips. The bindings, taut and cutting into his flesh, foreshadowed orgasm, his dick twitching in the leather jock. If Mark could have spoken, he would have begged the man to get inside him now, before he came without so much as the slap of his palm on Mark's bare ass.

But he couldn't speak; he could only moan into the hood.

And then the man was pressing near him. Mark no longer cared about foreplay...he wanted only for the man to fill him. His hardness pressed against Mark's ass, straining his suit's fabric. How delicious to be denied what he wanted so much, which was to reach back and caress, to guide...

But Mark would have to wait.

And the anticipation of the wait caused a delirium to rise up, at once painful and exquisite.

And then Mark felt fingers, cool, probing, pulling him apart. "Yes," he hissed, the word a serpent's hiss, emerging muffled from the hood.

And then something alien was at his ass, something strange, not quite right. The feel of it was cold and hard.

Metal.

Mark tensed, back arching.

The tip of something sharp pressed gently against his

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crack.

A knife. *My God, no.* The blade moved down, every once in a while nicking at the tender flesh, something hot, burning, and then the warm trickle of blood.

Mark clenched his muscles even more, trying to move away from the touch of the metal, nauseatingly confined by the restraints.

Was this all a part of the game? Would the knife be replaced with a dick? Or would he be impaled on eight inches of cold, pointed steel?

He no longer cared for the game. Desire deserted him without a backward glance.

Mark was about to cry out when he heard footsteps behind them, coming faster...faster.

* * *

Julio pulled the knife away as someone strode toward them. Blood trickled down the whore's thighs and, for a moment, it was all Julio could do to restrain himself from plunging the knife into his gut. Plunging and turning, moving upwards until he cut him open in a gaping wound that would cause his innards to spill out in a steaming mess: a fitting tribute.

Yet somewhere in the back of his brain, something forced him to stop, withdraw the switchblade, shut it and return it to his pocket.

A black man, wearing the uniform of the CTA, stood behind him. Dark eyes drank in the scene, and Julio could see

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the worker's emotions warring: should he stop them? Should he join them? The man was stunned.

A long time passed before the conductor said anything. Dark eyes widened, lips parted, he presented a face of confusion: at a total loss as to what he should say or do.

Suddenly, and this made Julio want to flick his blade in one fluid motion across this fool's throat, silencing him for good, the man said, "What's going on here?"

Julio grinned and turned his palms upward; gesture of innocence. A rat gnawed at his gut, waiting for the slut to realize his savior had arrived, to begin screaming beneath the leather hood.

Would he have time to dash from the train as the conductor helped the red haired whore unbind himself? Would he be able to dispense with them both and hop from the train undetected? The conductor's walkie-talkie buzzed and squawked: voices near.

* * *

Mark's tensing was of a different sort now. Discovery let relief course through his body like a drug, meshing with the adrenalin of his terror, filling him with energy.

"What's going on here?" The deep voice of authority repeated. This time, there was more confidence and conviction behind the words. What must the man think? Seeing him bound like this, ass and genitals upraised, on display.

The thought made him wish he could reach down and touch himself, for just an instant.

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Mark waited. Was the man still holding his knife? Mark doubted it: The voice of authority would not have such assurance had he a knife pressed against his gut.

And yet, there was the warm trickle of blood at Mark's thighs, clotting, growing sticky and viscous.

Mark wriggled, raising his ass and moaning.

"I asked you a question, man."

The one with the knife responded, "I'm terribly sorry. What can I say? We were having a little game. Things got out of hand."

Mark couldn't see the sheepish grin, but felt it in every word.

"Yeah, well the dude with the hood might have a different story to tell."

* * *

Julio couldn't help but laugh. Here he was, the decent one, while this filth inspired concern. Where were the standards?

Julio's throat felt dry as the conductor edged by him. His face felt cold and damp: He knew he was growing paler, maybe greener, by the moment. The conductor busied himself untying, unloosening.

Soon the moment would be here. Soon the whore would tell him about the knife. The train would stop somewhere, having radioed ahead to the police, and Julio, for all his good intentions, would be dragged into some dreary precinct where he would be expected to explain himself to cretins who had neither the inclination nor the intellectual capacity to

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understand.

It was over.

All his fun.

The leather hood came off, revealing a slick coat of sweat across the whore's features.

The whore grinned at him...and winked.

* * *

Mark could breathe. Air rushed into his lungs, cold, clean, invigorating.

"You all right, sir?"

Mark rolled his eyes. "You mean besides being embarrassed as hell?" Stooping, he gathered clothes and began pulling them on. "Yes, I suppose."

"You mean this man wasn't hurting you?"

Mark laughed. "No. It's just as he said: a game, one that got out of hand." He met the dark eyes of the conductor and held his gaze. "We were just bored. And very mistaken in choosing what to do to alleviate the boredom." Mark looked around the car as a mechanical voice announced the upcoming stop. "I suppose we're going to get run in for this. Lewd and lascivious behavior or something." Mark looked away. "Just what we needed. With all that's been going on..." He lifted his eyes to the conductor's face once more, searching for a weak point in the steadfast, dark-eyed stare. "I mean, you couldn't possibly see your way to letting us slip off the train at the next stop. You probably have a duty to do or something."

The CTA conductor thought for a moment. "Get off the

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train at the next stop and I saw nothing.”

Mark placed his hand on his knife-wielding date for the evening and squeezed. “Got enough for a cab?”

The man looked at him, as if he had just seen him for the first time, as if he had awakened from a dream. Nodded.

“Good. Then we’ll be on our way.” Mark slipped his toys into the leather pouch and stood straighter. The train was slowing. “We promise: this will never happen here again. Thank you.”

The conductor said nothing, following their every movement with a stare that telescoped bewilderment and, Mark knew, desire.

* * *

What was going on? Julio followed, control snatched away, as the guy led him off the el platform and on to the streets of Uptown.

He looked back and smiled. “Quite a scare, huh?”

Julio was too bewildered to answer. He fingered the knife in his pocket, stroking it, thumb and forefinger moving up and down. When he realized what he was parodying, he stopped.

The whore saw his hand emerge. “Is that where you’ve got it? The knife?”

Julio looked dumbly at him. The balance of power had shifted. When had he relinquished control?

Lawrence Avenue was busy: Cars hissing by in the night, people emerging from bars, calling to one another in drunken voices, bits of trash skittering along the street.

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How could he get the whore alone once more?
And then he rushed to the curb, one arm upraised.

* * *

Mark grinned as the cabdriver slowed. "C'mon!" Mark grabbed his hand and pulled him into the cab. He told the driver his address on Addison and snuggled against the guy, delighting in his revulsion, the stiffness of his spine at his warmth beside him. The cabbie, a big Hispanic man with a Walrus moustache watched them in the mirror, heavy eyebrows coming together in not-so-subtle disapproval. "*Maricones*," he whispered.

Mark winked at him.

* * *

Julio wondered why he was going along with the whore. His heart had slowed, blood thickening in the web of confusion, growing tighter.

He groped in his pocket for the knife and suddenly felt dizzy: streetlights swayed. As the nausea rose up like a wave, Julio wanted to turn and run.

The knife was gone.

The whore had been close in the cab, groping.

Now, the filth turned and took Julio's hand. "Don't worry," he whispered. "I took it merely for my own protection."

Julio shook his head and swallowed, or rather, tried to

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swallow, because there was no spit left in his mouth.

He followed, mute. A red swooning couch in the middle of the living room beckoned. He would be grateful to lie upon it, for just a moment, until he could collect himself, quell the pounding in his breast.

And then he would be in charge.

* * *

Mark, on all fours, purred like a cat, arched his back, rubbing long red hair over the man's leg, which dangled over the edge of the swooning couch.

He had tamed him! Well, at least until the confusion wore off. Then he would be like all the others.

Begging.

Mark stripped out of his clothes, dropping each piece deliberately, never letting his gaze waver from the man's.

He was naked and the room was barren of all save for the red couch.

He straddled his lover from the el, settling his stiffening sex across his chest, a trail of pre-cum dribbling down to stain the man's white shirt.

Mark's lover for the evening looked up, eyes wild, suddenly begging.

And Mark lifted the knife.

The man's eyes pleaded, but he was unable to say a word.

RICK R. REED

Rick R. Reed's horror/suspense fiction has been referred to as "a harrowing ride through cutting-edge psychological horror" (Douglas Clegg, author of *The Attraction*) and "brutally honest" (*Fangoria*). His most recent books include *IM*, a thriller about a serial killer preying on gay men through internet hook-up sites; *In the Blood*, a tragic vampire love story, and *Deadly Vision*, about a small town single mom who begins having psychic visions into a series of murders of teenage girls in her small Ohio River town. Other published work includes *A Face Without a Heart*, a modern-day version of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Published in Dell's acclaimed Abyss horror line, *Obsessed* and *Penance* together sold more than 80,000 copies. All three novels were re-released in 2006. Rick's short fiction has appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines. A collection of his short horror fiction, *Twisted: Tales of Obsession and Terror*, was published in 2006. Rick lives in Miami with his partner, Bruce and is at work on a new novel.

You can read more about Rick and his various titles at:

<http://www.rickrreed.com>

* * *

**Don't miss *Orientation*, by Rick R. Reed,
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