

Story Three
**Blood and
the Rose**

By William Pattison

Dedicated to Dan Curtis,
James D. Parriott, Anne Rice, and Jeff Rice

Rose Red stood on the corner of B Street and Thirteenth Avenue under the old-fashioned, ornate light pole, waiting for clients—just like she had every night for the last four years. The other girls who worked B Street used to joke about the fact that Rose had been testing fate by choosing to work the corner of Thirteenth Avenue, given the fact that thirteen was an unlucky number. But the truth was that Rose always made her quota of johns, unlike the other working girls. For her, Thirteenth Avenue was her lucky corner and she'd never give it up, even with a serial killer on the loose who was targeting prostitutes.

Out of fear, the majority of the working girls in the area had moved down the road to the blocks between Third and Seventh Avenues. This was because that locale was closer to Main Street, and most of the bars and restaurants were open in the evenings. For these ladies, that meant the comfort of having lights, movement, and lots of people around them. Unfortunately, this also meant a higher police presence and complaints, which wasn't really good for business.

She shook her head at her fellow prostitutes' ignorance. The truth was, it didn't matter how close to Main Street they put themselves, because the newspaper always mentioned that the killer had murdered his victims in a motel room. Moving down the street was false security on their part. If the "True Romance Killer", as the papers had dubbed him, wanted to get them, he'd get them. Changing location didn't mean shit. So why make life harder than it needed to be?

Life had not been an easy journey for Rose, not for a long time. She remembered that, when she had first come to California, she had been full of dreams and hopes of the good life. Her mother had filled her head full of images of stars and glamour and becoming the next Hollywood star. She could hear her mother's voice in her head....

Frances Jean, you are twice as pretty as Angelina or that Pretty Woman actress. They got nothing on you, my love. Any casting agent in LA would grab you up. No doubt about it.

So, after graduating high school, and with her mom's blessing, she left her home town of Rocky Mount, Virginia for Studio City, California. She arrived with stars in her eyes; after all, she had gotten special notice for her portrayal of the redheaded pink lady in the Rocky Mount Community Theatre production of *Grease*. That had to count for a lot, or so she thought.

Soon enough, she learned that she was no more than just another ignorant, brain-washed idiot.

Mama had had it right. Those casting agents really had the grabbing down good, but it didn't translate into starring roles. Though she did get that vaginal cream commercial. That was at least something.

Of course, like a lot of potential actresses in Hollywood, she ended up serving up burgers in a greasy spoon for a while to make rent. Then, in desperation, she turned to porn. *Hey, after all, Tracy Lords did porn and became a big star after she left it*, she told herself.

It wasn't so lucky for Frances Jean Law. For some reason, the only director who seemed willing to hire her was a director named Lucifer Baltazor, who specialized in puke fetish porn. Baltazor featured her in two of his films, *Prom Date Punkarama* and *Pukgoria Sacrifice*.

It was while in association with the talented Mr. Lucifer that Frances, aka Rose, met the man who would completely change her life. His name was Greg Doane. From the moment he saw her puking on another girl's tits, he took an immediate interest in her. She had thought it was love, but he had other ideas. He told her that her talents were wasted in porn and he wanted to take care of her. How could a lady say no?

So, Lover Boy got her hooked on coke and put her out on Hollywood Boulevard as a street walker. He even gave her a new name, Rose Red, because of her blazing red hair. He also came up with the idea of her wearing only the color red, from her shoes to her bra and panties. It was a hit with the johns. Thus, Rose Red was born and Frances Jean Law, the ignorant girl from Rocky Mount, Virginia, disappeared into the ether.

Greg had four other girls, but Rose was his favorite. He gave her the honor of not only lying with the johns, but also with him. It was Greg who impregnated her with her precious daughter, Princess, though he never knew that. He was shot and killed by a gang banger who tried to short one of his girls; when he tried to get rough on him, the john killed him in cold blood.

It was two days after Greg was shot that Rose found out she was pregnant. She immediately made a run for it, because she knew that the pimp who would be taking over Greg's operation would force her to have an abortion.

Rose ended up working as a waitress in the town of San Mareno in Northern California. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl who she named Princess Jean Law. Things were happy and shining for a while, until a friend got her back on coke. After that, her world fell apart.

She ended up losing her job. Eventually she had no choice but to return to the only thing she seemed to do best--prostitution. Soon after, Family Services came in and took Princess from her.

Rose was shattered.

After that, she pretty much became an empty shell. She was nothing but a thing that men used for their own base pleasures. Her nights were spent with men lying on top of her, grunting and slobbering, while her days were filled with drugs, pain, regret, and the face of her child every time she closed her eyes.

It was no wonder that Rose had no fear of The True Romance Killer. In fact, she wished he'd find her and end this joke of a life that fate had created for her. After all, every joke needed a punch line.

Rose glanced to one side and saw that the guy in the black trench coat was still leaning against the side of the building on the opposite corner, reading his newspaper. He was a tall, thin gentleman, his raven-colored hair greased and combed back. He had been there for the past three hours, and his glance had not wavered from his reading material.

Dangling from the pocket of his coat was a rather unique-looking cane. It had a white handle and a cherry-red wooden shaft that ended in a gold-colored metal tip. The cane barely

moved whenever the man turned a page; she could hardly believe how still he was. It was almost unnatural.

Rose wondered about her silent and unmoving companion. Was he her savior, come to end her miserable life? Was he a cop ready to arrest her the moment a john showed up? Or was he just an unusually shy john who just couldn't bring himself to come over and proposition her?

She sorely doubted the latter. This was not a man who had any trouble with women, she was sure. In fact, he looked to be the type who could have his choice of them, with that beautifully-chiseled aquiline profile. Greg had had a similar look, though not as sophisticated. He could wrap women around his little finger. She could vouch for that, because if it wasn't for Greg getting her all wet for him she wouldn't be standing here at this moment. So, she surmised, her trench-coated companion had to be either a serial killer or a cop.

Or he could even be a pimp. She shuddered at the thought. That was all she needed-- a pimp trying to step in and recruit her. She actually liked her independence, as lonely as it was.

She nearly chuckled at herself. Boy, the world had made her see things in a negative way. *Who knows, maybe he's just a slow reader and likes quiet and fresh air*, she thought to herself. Well, she doubted the last part; the place reeked of garbage. The homeless people who congregated in the area had a habit of dumping out the trash cans looking for meals. Didn't matter that St. Vincent's Church had a soup kitchen three blocks away, they still did it. It gave the place that special...ambiance.

She caught movement out of the corner of her eye and looked to her right, away from the guy in the black trench coat. A short, fat, balding man, wearing a white button-down shirt under a weathered-looking tan sweater vest, was walking up to her. The man had a chubby face and wore black-rimmed, cheap-looking eyeglasses. What little salt-and-pepper hair that was left on his head was greasy and unkempt. He had two days' worth of a five o'clock shadow on his face. His skin was coarse and peeling in places. He held his hands clenched in fists at his sides.

"How much for a blowjob?" he asked in a harsh, to-the-point, tone.

Wow, this one is a real charmer, she thought, trying hard not to make a face at his bad breath.

"More than you can afford, honey," she told him straight up. There was no way in hell she was going to put this guy's dick in her mouth. She had no doubt she'd get something nasty from Mr. Unbathed.

"What, you think I can't pay?" the chubby guy asked. He whipped out a battered leather wallet from his pocket and pulled out a thick clump of twenty-dollar bills.

"Don't care," she said, sticking her nose up at him. Even she had her standards. "I'm not interested."

"You fucking bitch!" he yelled, glaring at her. He drew back a fist.

Suddenly there was a flash of motion, and a cane with a cherry-colored shaft was pressed up against the guy's chest. The handle was an intricately-sculptured ivory dragon's head with sparkling ruby eyes.

"The lady said she's not interested," a soft, yet firm, voice said from beside her.

Rose was stunned. It was the man in the black trench coat. *But how did he get over here so fast?* she asked herself.

"Who the hell are you?" the chubby guy demanded, equally stunned. "Her pimp?"

"I'm the guy who is going to beat you senseless with this cane if you don't turn around and leave the way you came." The man in the trench coat slid the head of the cane up under the man's double chin. "Don't test me."

The heavy guy unclenched his fist. Then he lifted his other hand, unclenched it, and slowly started to back away.

“Nice way to treat a paying customer, bitch,” the loser said. “I’ll find me another whore who’ll be willing to accept my money.”

The man in the trench coat made a jabbing motion with the cane, and the chubby guy made a quick turn and started trotting down the street.

“Are you unharmed?” the man in the trench coat asked, giving her a concerned look.

“I’m fine.”

She looked at him sternly. “I could have handled that myself,” she lied. The truth was the guy had creped her out, and she had fully expected him to beat the crap out of her. Hell, her heart was still slamming in her chest.

“A gentleman never leaves a lady in need,” her mysterious savior told her.

“Oh, so you’re a gentleman,” she said, shaking her head. “You felt it was your duty to save this soiled rose. How manly of you. You’ve certainly made some brownie points for yourself.”

“I wasn’t looking for brownie points. I simply wasn’t going to stand by and allow that guy to assault you,” he said firmly, holding up his hand. He had a ruby ring in a gold setting on his ring finger. “Look, even though you are trying to play tough, I can see that this situation has affected you. What say I take you out of here? There is a coffee shop not too far away. You can sit down, have a warm drink, and recover.”

“Are you as dense as you seem?” she asked, giving him a quizzical look. “I’m working here. I don’t go anywhere unless pay is involved.”

“Then I’ll pay you,” the man said simply. “How much would it cost to rent you for the rest of the evening?”

Rose was stunned yet again. *Was this guy serious?* “I doubt you have enough in your wallet.”

“How much?” he asked again.

“A thousand,” she told him. The truth was, she’d never had a thousand-dollar night. Her best nights were usually more like four to five hundred dollars, but he had asked for a price, so she gave him one. *After all, a guy sporting a ruby ring should have some money.*