

Short Stories

by Clayton R. Douglas

A TREVOR CAMERON, TERRORIST HUNTER, SHORT STORY

Set chronologically after Deadly Flashes of Silver

BLACK HILLS BEAUTY

Word Count 5577

by

Clayton R. Douglas

I awoke to the subtle rocking informing me someone had just stepped on my houseboat. Being a little spooky these days, my nine millimeter was in my hand before my eyes were open. It seems like only yesterday I arrived in Miami in my homey little travel trailer but it's been over a year since it was blown to kingdom come. So many people have tried to kill me this year, the gun never is far from my reach.

A knock on the hull told me it was friend, not foe. I got up, slipped some shorts on and let Clark in. I automatically checked on my bike, chained to the dock by a Cobra lock. It was still there. The Cobra is the best you can buy but this is Miami so you never really know.

Clark made himself at home by starting the coffee. He glanced at the rumpled bed with the Smith and Wesson on the pillow and raised an eyebrow. "You prefer sleeping with that to women these days?"

"Less hassle," I grunted, still not ready to accept the fact it was morning. I sat down and turned the computer on in another automatic gesture.

"Hey, are you still sore about losing that girl to your alter ego?"

I ignored him as I checked out my computer for E mail for messages from my office. Lately it seemed to be getting harder for me to maintain my two identities. One sat at the computer now, making all the decisions it takes to keep a large real estate and property management company solvent. As Trevor Hamilton, chairman of the board of Hamilton Properties, I really had little to do outside of my morning messages and decisions. The rest of my day I spent as Trevor Cameron, boat bum, biker and knight errant. Defender of the meek, corrector of injustices, and big-hearted chump!

The girl to whom he referred was a Jamaican beauty I fell hard for. I had followed her to Bimini to rescue her from a platoon of Arab terrorists armed with an atomic bomb. There I learned she had gone there voluntarily and was sleeping with their leader. Then things really got hairy and I got both of us into real trouble. After getting my ass kicked all the

way across the Atlantic everything worked out, the world, or at least Miami, was saved but I had little or nothing to do with it.

In other words, Trevor Cameron got himself showed up bad. So Trevor Hamilton steps in to try and save the day. He arranges to make the lady photographer famous. Nothing she didn't deserve, it's just that she decided she would rather wait to meet Mr. Hamilton, now that she was on the road to success, than to hang out with a biker named Cameron.

So I fucked up. What little satisfaction I got was the thought of her hanging around my Houston offices waiting to get an audience with the elusive Hamilton.

Clark wouldn't let it lay. "Why didn't you just tell her who you really were?"

"Because this is who I really am!" I growled.

Lesser men would have been put off. I'm six four in bare feet and weigh in around two twenty. Not Clark!

"This is who you are? This scruffy creature with the scowl who hasn't shaved in three days and who sports a scraggly moustache and goatee! Whose hair hasn't been cut in two months? Who would rather ride that damn Harley than attend a stockholders meeting of his own company?" He said, referring to the stir my absence had created a few months back. He poured me a cup of coffee and handed it to me.

"Hey, it was Daytona Bike Week!" I protested weakly. Next year I would move the stockholders meeting up a month to April.

"Well, I think it's time you cut this shit out and got back to reality. You have become a danger junkie. Otherwise you wouldn't live in this crime-ridden city. Everyday I read about someone being shot or mugged. If that isn't enough, you take your life into your hands every time you get on that bike with all the tourists driving around down here."

"So? It's the same anywhere. You don't have to stay here. If you hate it that much go back to your Louisiana swamp!"

"Hey, I'm not worried about me! I don't attract shit like you do. Besides, who would look out for you?"

Clark is real bright. He is very logical and it is very hard to argue with him when he's right. Although he is on my payroll, he doesn't act like it. As my friend, he is invaluable to me as my connection with the real world. He and his roommate, Tony Miata, are the only people in Miami that know about my dual life. Clark is an ex-pot connoisseur and dealer I hired away from a life of crime. Tony Miata is a gruff DEA agent who ended up being a friend. Clark and Tony hit it off so well they became roommates. Talk about strange!

"So, what's on the agenda today, boss. Are we working or playing?"

"Nothing on the wire that needs attending to." I remarked, standing and stretching. "Let me jump in the shower the we'll figure out some way to get through the day."

A glance in the mirror told me it would be a good idea to trim my new beard, just in case I wanted to get served in a restaurant. I turned the

shower on hot and thought about Clark's comments. After thoroughly reviewing both identities in my mind it was obvious I was a bit jealous of Hamilton because I was more comfortable being Cameron, the danger junkie. The lowrider sitting on the dock had been mine since it rolled off the showroom floor in '82 but it had begun to take up more and more of my time. I found the company of hard-core bikers preferable three piece suits in the business world. Bikers are real. They tell you what they think.

And Miami? It's beautiful and dangerous and I love it but maybe it was time to get away for a while. I was getting too jumpy.

"What's the date, Clark?" I called as I got out of the shower.

"July 28th. Why?"

"You're right. I need to get out of Miami. So you're in charge." I pulled on a pair of jeans, my high boots and a T-shirt. I put a couple of extra jeans and shirts in a pack, along with my raingear and leather jacket. A toilet kit topped it off and I carried it out into the salon where Clark was staring at me as though I had lost my mind.

"What are you doing? Where are you going?"

"Sturgis. I'm going to Sturgis!"

He followed me out to the bike. "Where the hell is Sturgis?"

"South Dakota."

"On this? You're going to ride this all the way to South Dakota? On the spur of the moment?"

"Not quite spur of the moment. I've known about it all along, I just hadn't made up my mind."

"How am I supposed to handle all your affairs?"

"They only talk to me by computer. You liked being Hamilton so much, keep on being him for a couple of weeks."

"What if I make the wrong decision? It could cost you millions!"

I started the bike. "See why I like being Cameron!" I smiled at him and cranked the bike a couple of times to irritate the late sleeping blow-boaters down the dock, put it in gear and rode down the dock with a wave of farewell.

I love my boat. I love my truck. But there is something about a riding a motorcycle at 80 miles an hour down a lonely highway that excites me, and a lot of other men and women, like nothing else. Some say its better than sex because you can do it all day long and into the night.

The further north and west I went, the more my old identity slid from my shoulders. I welcomed the dirty looks from the old men and women I passed on the freeway and waved at the little kids who stared hungrily at me and my bike.

On the road, it's just the wind and the road and the roar of the bike. It's music of a sort, highly addictive, appealing only to a certain, small part of our population. While there are a lot of part time riders, not many love it well enough to ride day after day, mile upon mile. Facing the fickle elements directly without the steel and glass cage to protect you is not for

everyone. The rain and sun take their toll but imbue a sense of pride and freedom not available to the thousands of tourists I passed on the way.

I bought a sleeping bag outside of Atlanta and used it for a couple of nights before the smell of my sweat forced me into a motel outside of St. Louis.

The motel was clean but the manager was a fag. His boyfriend was partially visible through the door to their living quarters. Just to be obstinate, I signed in with a fake name and paid cash. You see, Cameron is my real name now, having changed it upon learning who my father really was. Using the name, Mac Jones, turned out to be the brightest move I had made all year.

I chained the bike to the awning despite the objections of the manager, and brushed by him and into my room. Barely getting my helmet off, I was asleep before I hit the bed. I awoke still clothed. I got up and took a leak, peering out the window to see that my bike was still there. Something had aroused me from a sound sleep.

Then I heard it. A quiet, steady sobbing from the room next door. A man's voice, authoritative. Demanding. Insistent. Then pleading, then the sound of flesh striking flesh. A sharp, high pitched scream, then more sobbing.

A domestic squabble? Husband wants sex, his old lady wants sleep? Nothing to get involved in. The old lady was out of line at the bar tonight. Hubby's pissed. It'll pass. Go back to sleep, Cameron. Nothing you can do. Don't fuck up your vacation. You're a stranger in a strange state.

Then the scream again. Plaintive, terrified, pain being inflicted.

Call the police? Inform the wimpy, whining manager? No one could hear it but me. They had the end room and the motel was sparsely inhabited.

So I opened my door and knocked on theirs.

"Go the fuck away and mind your own business, asshole!" The voice was deep and masculine.

"Help me, please," came the terrified voice of a young girl!

I had already wasted enough time with self doubt. My size twelve boot impacted the door with all my weight behind it and twenty years of practice in dojos across the country. It splintered and flew open to reveal a naked man leaning over a young girl frantically pulling on the shreds of her dress. His hard-on was pressed against her tightly clenched thighs and in the dim light from the nightstand I could see his handprint glowing red across her pale cheeks.

She couldn't have been more than sixteen, he over fifty!

The rage consumed me! Years of training took over and my body went into motion. In two strides I was beside the bed. He was suddenly conscious of his nakedness and his vulnerability. He froze. I took him off her by the hair he had left and put my left hand around his throat. I slammed him into the wall with enough force to knock the wind out of him.

I held him with my left and slapped him repeatedly with my right until all resistance left his body. He dropped to the floor and I turned to the girl.

"Are you all right?"

She nodded without conviction.

"What happened here?" I asked, irritated at sounding like a cop.

"He wanted sex. I didn't." she said simply, looking at him with a strange look in her eyes, as though she was just seeing him for the first time.

"You better get out of here, whoever you are," said the man on the floor, "before I have you arrested for breaking and entering and assault."

"I think the police will be much more interested in you, asshole. I doubt that rape is condoned in Missouri."

"I am the police, you idiot!" he screamed. "There's no rape here. I was just disciplining her. This is a private matter and no business of yours, you fucking biker scum. I'm a St. Louis cop and you're in deep shit."

I was unimpressed. Men with badges are just men with badges. "You always get a hard-on beating up young girls?" She was on her feet now and looking through a small suitcase for some clothes that weren't ripped.

When I turned to look at her, he got up his nerve and dove across the bed. I hadn't noticed the gun on the end table until he had it in his hand. I dove over the bed and reached him before he could take aim. My hand grasped the gun and I used the barrel as a lever to turn it away from me.

The shot sounded like a cannon going off in that small room. A surprised look crossed his face. He looked down and saw the blood pumping from his chest. A sigh spilled from his lips as he sunk to the floor. I stared at him, stunned at the rapid set of events. I looked at her. She stared at his body for a couple of seconds, then looked at me.

"We better get out of here!"

"Wait a minute. This was self defense. He was attacking you. He pulled a gun on me!" I stammered. "We haven't done anything wrong! Why would you want to run? That'll only make us look guilty!"

"This guy was a cop! He was arresting me for being a hooker. Do you really think the Saint Louis cops are going to believe you broke down the door just to save me? They'll hang us both! I'm a runaway with a record and you're a biker! Get real. You just killed a cop and I'm no credible witness! I'll go to jail as an accessory. Before they take us out of the hotel room they'll have their version written in stone!"

She could be right. I walked over to the door to see how much attention we had attracted. To my surprise, there were no lights on, no people looking out the window. The shot hadn't been heard! No one had seen or heard me kick in the door!

I took the sheet and wiped all traces of my fingerprints from the gun. We gathered up her small bag and the dress he had torn off her. We closed the door as we left the best we could. It would pass until the maid

came. Quietly we went next door to my room. I took a moment to wipe down anything I might have touched in that room then loaded the bike and pushed it from the parking lot.

Through it all she never said a word.

She didn't speak until St. Louis fell behind us.

"Thank you," she said.

I didn't answer until we were out of Missouri and into Illinois.

"You're welcome."

She didn't answer. She was asleep, sandwiched between me and the sissy bar.

When the sun rose, I had to wake her as we pulled into a truck stop. I gassed the bike and bought us breakfast. She devoured hers and asked for more pancakes. "How long has it been since you ate?"

"Days, at least."

"Where are you from?"

"Chicago." Getting information from her was like pulling teeth.

"What were you doing in St. Louis?"

"Trying to get enough money to get to Denver."

"Who's in Denver?"

"Nobody. I just always wanted to see the mountains."

"Where's your family?"

"Mother's dead. Dad's a drunk. He wasn't any better than that cop you killed."

She said it matter of factly. I winced and looked around to see if anyone had heard. I was lucky again.

"Look. This is not the kind of thing you discuss in public places."

"You brought it up. My dad had been fucking me since I was twelve. I just got tired of it and came here. That prick was my first trick. A cop. He wasn't even going to pay me. I was so hungry. I wish he had been my dad." Then the tears started, silently rolling down her cheeks.

I passed her a napkin. She used it and looked at me. "Thank you for feeding me. You want a blow job?"

"No, thanks." Although I felt a stirring in my jeans. Beneath the wind blown blonde hair and smudged make up she was a very pretty girl. Blue eyes peered through too heavily applied mascara.

She must have read my look if not my thoughts. "Oh, I'm a mess. Let me go clean up. I'll be right back."

She knew already what men wanted and was more than willing to pay for her breakfast. Suddenly I felt a chill of fear. What if she didn't come back from the restroom?. She was my only witness. If she disappeared and I had overlooked some tiny bit of evidence, I could get life!

I breathed a sigh of relief when she returned from the bathroom. She was my companion for the time being, like it or not.

"Would you like to go to Sturgis with me?" I asked casually. While she might be street-wise, she couldn't know what we might be faced with if I had left any clues.

For the first time, her smile lit up her face. "Gee, that would be fun! But maybe you should tell me your name."

Her name was Charlotte and she was a perfect companion. She loved riding with me, made no complaints or demands and did not seem compelled to talk or ask questions. I introduced myself as Mac. Caution prevailed over honesty. I hate being dependent on anyone and considering the circumstances under which we met, she already had me by the balls, if she was that kind of woman!

She seemed puzzled that I didn't take her up on her offer of sex. It was hard. She was a perfectly fine female of the species. 36C, twenty four inch waist and a tight little butt. I was intensely aware of her as she held on to me in our flight across Iowa. I kept my intentions purely platonic, despite her offer. For some reason I felt compelled to show her not all men were like her father, which I was old enough to be, and the dick in St. Louis.

Reviewing the incident over and over in my mind in the screaming silence of the wind, I decided I had a chance to get away with it. I had been wearing a helmet and a face shield in Missouri when I checked into the motel. The manager hadn't seen my face. I had not registered under any name near mine, out of perverseness. Nor had anyone seen my Florida plate. My pack had slid down and covered it. There were no fingerprints to lead them to me. My bloodstained clothes were now ashes in an Illinois corn field. There would be a local alert for a big biker but they could not directly link me to the crime. My companion said the clerk had not seen her in the back of his squad car. The police would be looking for a single rider. We were safer together. Thus, I justified my actions.

She seemed untroubled by her near rape and witnessing the death of a fellow human being. Was it courage or was it just another TV show to one still evolving from the ignorant bliss of youth? I decided she had the maturity few possess to accept the things they could not change and the courage to live on without self-recrimination.

I liked this woman/child!

I had tried to involve no one in my adventures. When it came down to a matter of life and death I trusted no one with mine. Not even Clark. Tony Miata came the closest. He's DEA and a real threat to Colombian drug lords but not to me. He's smokes a little pot from time to time, (Agents are rarely tested) something he and Clark have in common. While he would bust me if I was dealing, (which I don't) he is an ally when things get a little dirty.

He has tried to persuade me many times to pin on a badge but the biker bent to my brain won't let me do it. We cooperate only when it is to our mutual interests.

Like when DiAngelo the dealer blew up my trailer with my girlfriend still in it. Tony gave me the information and DiAngelo was heard of next when the Cuban gunboats blew his boat to smithereens. DiAngelo was

dead long before his boat reached Cuba. The government saved millions of taxpayer's dollars. Tony got a promotion and I lived through it.

So it seemed logical to me to call him up from a phone booth in a truck stop out of Sioux City. When he answered his private line it was with his usual, sarcastic, raspy voice. "That you, Cameron?"

A chill ran up my spine. It wasn't a good sign, I don't call that often!

"What is it, you got a line that only I have the number?" I knew that wasn't true.

"Naw, I just got it off the news wires. I got orders in the computer that brings me my morning reading. It shows me all the stories in newspapers across the country that have certain key words or phrases, like Colombian, pot, cocaine, drugs and gangland murders. Recently I included biker in the criteria. Clark told me you went to Sturgis. Then I read about a detective being shot with his own gun with the only suspect being a huge, unidentified biker. No clues, no fingerprints, no witnesses. Somehow I thought about you! So why are you calling, Cameron?" he said pleasantly.

I hate it when he's pleasant.

"I just had a little information about that very incident."

"Somehow I knew that."

"There was a witness. A girl that this guy tried to rape. When someone kicked the door in and tried to stop it, the guy went for his gun. There was a struggle and the gun went off. The girl was underage, an abused runaway,"

"So how did you come upon this?"

"She ran away to me."

"Does she know the guy that saved her?"

"Never saw him before. Doesn't know his name." I said carefully.

"How old?"

"I'd say sixteen but I haven't asked her. She doesn't volunteer much."
" I added.

"So what are you planning on doing with her?"

"I don't know. I'm on my way to Sturgis as I originally planned. She was sure that the cops would protect their own. That meant making her out to be a liar and the guy into a murderer. I thought it was remarkable insight for a girl so young."

"Gee, if this guy was a federal agent, I might have some say in this but as of right now it's just a local, state-wide manhunt. I imagine they would think that the guy was headed for Sturgis and the cops would be out in force, checking every one they could. Of course, with a hundred thousand guys there answering to the vague description they have, he might just be lucky enough to slip through. The only lead they really have is that boot print on the door."

"Quit trying to enlist me, Tony. It won't work. If you can't help, I'll think of something else. They don't know about the girl and they won't if that's what it takes. Have someone meet me in Sturgis on Monday at noon

on the southwest corner of Main and Junction and I'll let him take the girl's statement. If that's not enough I'll let you put her on a polygraph. Later."

"What if I just let the locals handle it?"

"I would really feel bad about that. I don't have that many friends."

He chuckled, "I love talking with you, Trevor. You have such a way with words. If everyone was like you wiretaps would be useless. So where are you now?"

"Gone." I hung up.

Dealing with Tony is a little like having a pet rattlesnake. You have to handle it carefully and never forget that it is dangerous.

"What now?" she asked.

"A shoe shop. These boots have gone to hell and need new soles!"

Clark likes to say that I'm lucky. We argue about it all the time. He says to have lived through all the things I have is luck. I say to get in those situations in the first place rules out everything but bad luck. I was glad to accept his version this time. We made it through South Dakota without getting stopped though I saw many bikes pulled over. We barely escaped a freak storm complete with a tornado that picked up one biker and slammed him across the highway. A little rain and dust was the worst we endured.

We got to Sturgis on Sunday. We stayed at a campground a few miles from town. She was fascinated by the bikes, by the bikers and their uninhibited partying. Their shouts of "Show us your tits!" were rewarded by a big smile but little else. She took them in stride as she had everything that had transpired.

The police had called in reinforcements from neighboring states so we stayed in the campground. We slept in our clothes but huddled together for warmth. It was getting harder and harder to remain aloof from this mature young lady. Her common sense, bubbly personality and unassuming nature made her one of the best female companions I had been with since Donna with the alabaster eyes had been killed.

We made it into town on Monday. At noon I stood in front of the tattoo shop with a thousand bikers dressed just like me. Many were the same height. The hunt for me had intensified the closer I got to Sturgis. Talk on the street was about how the cops were pulling over any and everybody for no reason. I kept my mouth shut and talked to no one to avoid calling any more attention than we already were.

Charlotte attracted many stares and appreciative whistles. I could feel the envy of a hundred men. She seemed to have blossomed when we reached the Black Hills. A more beautiful woman would have been hard to find. I stood close and adopted a protective stance that kept many from hitting on her. At two minutes after twelve, a hand touched my shoulder and said softly, "Cameron?"

I turned to see a long-haired, bearded biker who I didn't recognize. "Do I know you?" I said coldly, wondering whether she had heard or not.

"Tony told me to look you up when I got to Sturgis. My name is Lou." He held out his hand. I took it. "Listen, can I buy you and your girlfriend a cup of coffee?"

"Sure." He led the way to Bob's Cafe a half block down Main. He was wearing a patch of one of the most well known bike gangs.

He led me through a darkened hallway to a back room. The room appeared to have been unused for years from the dust on the floor. There was no waitress. The coffee was waiting on the table. His old buddy manner disappeared as we sat down.

"This is highly irregular. I don't like it at all. I've spent the last five years getting to where I am now and Miata tells me to break cover to get the statement of some sixteen year old girl. Who are you anyhow?"

"Just Mac to you, Lou!" I ordered, breaking into his tirade. I turned to Charlotte, "Honey, tell this man what happened to you in St. Louis. Everything that happened up until you met me." We had discussed what she would say. Whether or not she would go along with my plan was yet to be seen.

"First of all, I'm seventeen." she said defiantly.

"Shouldn't you be taping this?" I interrupted.

"I am," he said with a glare and tapping his Sturgis pin.

She told it all like a pro. Right up to and including the point about the unknown biker that had rescued her. How scared she had been when he left her there and how relieved she was to run into me. He listened patiently and didn't say a word until she finished. "I'll pass this information along. I would recommend you leave Sturgis a little early. If the locals decide you are a likely suspect you may be tied up in South Dakota a little longer than you planned. This ought to take a little heat off you but stay in touch with Miata,"

"No problem. I tried to step carefully on the dust you had spread back there on the floor so you should have a good imprint for Miata. Thanks, Lou. Maybe we'll meet again sometime. I've got some friends out there in Oakland. I hope you don't cross them."

His face turned pale as all the blood rushed from it. It was a dangerous game he played. So. . . call me cruel. The battle lines are drawn. His friends know the risks when they cross the line and so did Lou. I have friends on both sides so I don't take sides or help one or the other but he didn't know that.

I didn't leave right away. A call to Miata the next day informed me that the manager had seen a handcuffed young girl trying to get out of the back seat of the patrol car that night after I had rolled in. He didn't see her closely enough to identify her but it wasn't the first time he had seen it happen with the same cop. It seems my boot print didn't match the one on the door so the heat was off. An internal investigation had been launched into the affairs of the deceased

So we took a few days to go sightseeing. Mount Rushmore, Deadwood, the Black Hills and Devils Tower. I drove the speed limit and didn't drink to give them no reason to question me.

By this time the question of what to do with her was immaterial. She would ride south with me and I would help her get settled in Houston or Miami. I had decided to tell her my real name the next day. (Well, one of them, anyway!) We talked about how she could get her GED and maybe start college while she worked at a firm owned by a friend.

As we left we took a detour through Badlands National Park. I had begun to think of her as a woman but the sight of the wind sculpted rocks brought out the excited little girl in her. The close proximity of her full grown body pressed so tightly against mine had made my thoughts and intentions vacillate wildly. I had to keep reminding myself she was still a child.

We were still in the park as the sun set. We stopped along the side of the road and watched as the sun created exotic shadows among the intricate shapes created by the union of Mother Nature and Father Time. With the sunset came a chill wind and we called it a night. I found an out-of-the-way spot and we nestled in next to a shallow cave-like depression in the yellow rock. I built a small fire to keep the chill away and we spread the one sleeping bag on the sand, I pulled out the lightweight, space age blanket I kept in my pack. I laid down beside her and drew the covers over our clothed bodies but I couldn't sleep. Neither could Charlotte.

In a small voice she said, "Mac?"

"Yeah," I answered.

"Know what today is, Mac?"

"No, Charlotte."

"It's my birthday, Mac! I'm a woman today!"

Then she was in my arms, her lips on mine and her hands were busy unbuttoning my clothes.

Much later I told her, "My name's Trevor Cameron, Charlotte."

She smiled coyly. "I know! Hamilton, too. I went through your wallet days ago, you silly, noble darling. I don't care what you want to call yourself. Now, maybe you can relax and do that to me again!"

THE END

Follow the adventures of Trevor Cameron in the soon to be released novels, "One Bloody Alabaster Eye" and "Deadly Flashes of Silver" by Clayton R. Douglas.