

# Homicide: The Game

Presents

# Painseeker

“Hunter”

by Kyle McAllister

Despite the fact that there are over 3 1/2 million people here, many people who meet me know immediately that I am not from Los Angeles. I take that as a compliment. Typical L.A. natives (and their wannabe variations) share a desperate pursuit of artifice and avarice.

I didn't come here to seek my fortune, as others have hinted. I came to make music. If you want money, you go to the bank. If you want to make music, you go to Los Angeles. If you don't like it, you either get out or keep your mouth shut and stay.

I decided to stay. The cramped apartment wasn't much but it was cheap and it was mine. It was my home away from my homeland.

And when Raychel needed my help, I didn't bring her home. I brought her to my homeland.

I tell people I'm from Fargo, North Dakota just to keep them from asking again. When I say I'm from Fargo, people from Los Angeles regard me as an odd pet. With a population of 90,000 people, they wouldn't know it existed if not for the movie.

The truth is I'm not really from there, either.

About 35 miles north of Fargo is a town of ten streets and a population of 326.

That is Hunter.

And about five minutes away is my parent's old wheat farm. All 1,500 acres of it.

Population: two.

Me and Raychel.

When my parents died a few years ago, it became mine. I have chosen to rent the farmland out to neighboring farmers, who are more than happy to take care of it for me. I'm sure my parents wouldn't appreciate the irony.

Before I was born, my parents followed the hippie ideal and moved from New York City to North Dakota to "simplify their lives." Unlike most hippies, however, they decided to keep their combined family portfolios intact and chose to operate their land as a single-family farm instead of a commune. The combined income of the farm and the interest from their holdings could kept us in comparative luxury. However, my parents chose simplicity over luxury. TV was regulated to special occasions. We read a great deal, and there was always music. Both of my parents were accomplished musicians, but it was my mother who took it upon herself to teach me everything she knew.

And that took years. Thankfully, I had the time to kill. Actually, I had nothing but time to kill. So I learned how to play everything she had at her disposal to teach. Piano, violin, guitar, saxophone, percussion, bass, trumpet, and so on and so forth. And every night was a recital night. I learned more from playing for my parents than any bluesman ever learned from going down to the crossroads. Thank you very much, Robert Johnson.

The solitude I felt was quite another lesson. One that I actually failed. Failure on this front takes a long time. First you have to understand that you are alone, then you have to understand the waste of time your life is, and then you run for escape.

On a Saturday night when I was in my late teens, my friends and I drove the half hour into Fargo to find anything we could to entertain ourselves. During one of these trips I learned something that could fill my dead time.

Heroin.

The less said about my own addiction, the better. Needless to say that I drove many people I loved past the edge of patience. I hurt everyone who knew me.

When I needed help, my parents helped me. They found a doctor in Fargo who was willing to help a junkie using Methadone Maintenance Treatments. On an MMT, the junkie is treated with slowly decreasing doses of Methadone until the dependence is severed. If you would like more detailed information, please seek a professional or one of the numerous MMT program web sites (which should also put you in touch with a trained professional).

So when Raychel needed help, I knew where to find it. I just had to bring her there. That was why I acted as I did that night at Safehaven.

Raychel was hard to control for the first few hours. She would alternate between shouting at me, hitting me, and dead calm. She couldn't maintain her strength for any real length of time. So much the better for both of us.

The withdrawal kicked in after half a day. A steady rotation of vomiting, sweats, and chills. I rarely left the right lane during the two-day drive to Fargo.

Then it was straight to Dr. Penbrook's office. I didn't need to tell him what was wrong. I also didn't have to ask for his help.

It took about four weeks for Raychel to show her first sign of life. I had underestimated Lance and Laura's hold on her. However, I had two things on my side. First, I had personally gone through the treatment so I knew what she felt. Second, I had infinite patience and time. I do not want for money, as others have guessed, so I do not require a steady job. Also, Raychel was five miles from the closest town, and even had she guessed the correct direction to travel in, she would have stuck out like a pool in the desert.

Still, you have no idea how happy I was when she asked for some paper and a pen. When you are a junkie, you join an army of smackheads whose only thought is the acquisition of more junk. You know you've broken the addiction when you begin

thinking or doing things not connected to junk. To me, her request was a vindication. It was the only one I needed.

When she began writing again, she didn't seem to stop. I wondered if this was what she was like before she met Laura and Lance. I can tell you one thing about her work: she had been reborn as a writer. Lance said that he felt that I molded Raychel into a new image that was built for marketing. He is wrong. Raychel re-imagined herself. I think she began to become the person she wanted to be. Removing the junk from her life enabled that.

On April 22, Raychel showed me one of her new poems and I knew instantly that our lives would never be the same. I didn't say anything to her at first. I merely read it for what it was. A poem with a haunting recurring line that kept you guessing about the poem's message.

*...dreams no more dreams no more dreams no more...*

I asked her permission to hold onto the poem for the day. She never admitted it, but sometimes I think she knew what I was thinking, and that she came up with the idea first. She just wanted me to discover it, too.

I waited all of an hour before retreating to the barn. I work best there. I brought an acoustic guitar with me. It didn't take long for me to find the right combination. A simple, wistful melody for the verses. A dark meditative line for the chorus. It probably took ten minutes. Like it had been stuck in my brain for years and had finally found its target. Once I had it, I began branding it into my memory, even providing the vocals on my own. Even though I knew I couldn't sing them myself. They were meant for a woman. One haunted woman.

*"dreams no more dreams no more dreams no more..."*

I turned in shock. Caught. Her expression wasn't very different from mine I assumed. How long had she been listening to me?

“Long enough.” The pause was a canyon. Finally, “ I like it.”

She sat beside me. A little more close than friendly. The hollow instrument between us felt like lead. I asked her if she wanted to try it. She did. It was magical. Not perfect, a little tentative, but we both knew there was something to it. As we continued to work, she asked if I would go into the house and get her notebooks (she still lacked strength sometimes). She had some other ideas.

We traded our trades that night, music for words and back again. She would search out a poem in her new work, and I would try and pick out an accompanying line. She would in turn try something else. Reword a phrase. Pick out another poem that she felt would work better. It was musical free association. It was the best day of my life. Everything else is prologue and epilogue to that night.

Before we tired we had arranged four of her poems into workable songs. More than that, Raychel had found another new interest. And with it came a new name.

We sat on the porch late that evening. All the lights were off in the house. You didn't need them anyway. The stars were enough to see by for our purposes.

Out of nowhere she asked a question she hadn't asked since she had arrived, “What's the date?”

I answered April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

“Taurus. . . Raychel Taurus.”

I was confused. She was laughing.

“I feel born again, Kyle. I was thinking maybe a change in name would be fitting to commemorate it. Besides, who's going to buy a Raychel Vanderhoff album? Taurus the Bull. It sounds strong.”

I agreed.

“It’ll sell like Hell,” she said. “Raychel Taurus.”

She slid over on the bench, closer to me, and buried her head in my chest. I stroked her long hair. It was glowing in the starlight. A sense came over me, rolling up from under my stomach, turning up tremors in my hands. My mouth moved without knowing. I love you.

Face still hiding in my chest, I couldn’t see her face, but I could feel her expression change. I prayed momentarily for the best.

“I know.”

It would have to do.

I smiled to myself.

And then she kissed me.

She was perfect.

We were perfect.

I suggested we go inside.

“Why?”

I stumbled over myself. A wish began to die.

She unbuttoned her shirt.

“We can stay out here. There’s no one to see us. Besides, it’s a beautiful night.”

It was.

Raychel was new, clean, and reborn. I had accomplished what I had been called on to do. Through our actions, a new path was created by talent and accident. We had an opportunity to be something great together. For another two months, I truly believed it.