

THE HEIRESS AND
THE SEX TAPE



ROBERT JAMELL



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Using his contacts Conte comes up with a plan that almost backfires on him. Before he arrives, Liz and the one young man she made the tape with are attacked in a drive by shooting. Questions arise about the shooting. In addition, the girl who shot the video is a retired adult film star and is being hunted by her former producer. And, to add to the confusion, Diane Sunnery is missing. Conte is

embroiled in both the shooting and the missing sister. The story weaves between Pittsburgh and New York City...

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An R. Blaise Conte Mystery

Robert Jamelli

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Chapter 8

Road Trip

Saturday – Early Morning and Afternoon

Conte was to meet up with Happy Jack at the Mid-Time Diner. It was eight in the morning. Conte arrived but there was no sign of Happy Jack. Conte ordered eggs and coffee for two and looked over the diner's copy of the *Daily News*. Happy Jack arrived a few minutes later.

"I ordered two eggs and coffee for you. Do you have the paper?"

"You know, Conte, you are a real prick. Yes, and I worked on it almost all night. It isn't my best work but it should fool whoever you are trying to scam." The eggs arrived and Happy asked for some bacon and put it on his tab.

The two birth certificates were almost identical. If Conte had not known the real birth date, he could have been fooled. "These are great," he said. "So, what isn't right, just in case someone is smarter than I am?"

"It's the paper. I could not get the official weight paper at such short notice." He started to eat and his bacon arrived. "Good bacon."

Conte said, "Honey, bring me the check," as the waitress walked away.

Conte felt the paper. If you really held it and rubbed it, you could feel the official certificate had a different feel. "I don't think this will be a problem. Anything else?" He knew Happy Jack would give one error at a time.

"This coffee is good. You eat here all the time?"

"Sometimes. Anything else I should know about the paper?"

"No, as I told you, the weight is off and the official seal isn't exactly correct. You need a magnifying glass to see the error. My seal is last year's and it doesn't have the same size. Mine is a little larger."

"That shouldn't be a problem either. Is that it?" Conte took an envelope out of his inside jacket pocket, counted out \$200, and pushed it over to Happy Jack.

"No, that's it. I guess a tip is out of the question?"

"Breakfast is the tip." The waitress brought the check. He paid it and told her to keep the change.

Conte headed to the parking lot where he kept his car. He had gassed up earlier and was ready to head for Pittsburgh. He had his concealed-weapon permit and Pennsylvania PI license in his wallet. The drive would take six to seven hours.

He called Diane's cell phone. He told Diane to tell her sister he would call her around three in the afternoon. Conte would confront the video shooters with the fake birth certificate, warn them about child porn laws, and say his client would press

charges—unless they agreed to give him access to all feeds, DVDs, and any other sources the videos were on. Once he got them, he would delete and destroy them. Plan B would be trickier: convince the Pittsburgh vice squad of the same thing and not get caught.

Hancock told Lee, "This is another reason I am getting on the desk for my last two years. Hollerman calls and tells us to meet up with Britley and his case. And here we are, trying to figure this drive-by shooting and nobody made coffee yet."

"Bill, stop griping. Dave Wingate and Krispy Krame are coming in with witnesses or possible victims soon." Lee looked at her watch; it read 1:12 a.m. They could hear Wingate and Krame coming up the steps.

"Hey, guys. No one died. But the girl, Liz Sunnery, is in serious condition and in surgery. The guy, Ronnie Jones, was hit in his arm and his body. He is also in surgery and is considered critical. He gave some information before he passed out," Wingate said.

Krame added, "We're not sure if this was gang-related or just a random act of violence. We have two kids in rooms three and four."

"According to our witnesses, this was a salt-and-pepper couple holding hands, walking down the street. The two witnesses were walking out of the

Hot Dog Shop when the car—dark color, no make or model, no plates—opened fire from the back seat. They said the shooter seemed to be aiming specifically at the couple. But they also hit the ground. There was a third person hit. There was no one else in the vicinity.”

“Any other witnesses?”

“We took some names and phone numbers, and asked if they saw anything. This happened so quickly. Some of the preliminary investigation is being done by forensics now.”

Lee said, “Bill, how about you and Krispy doing some background on the victims, Ronnie Jones and Liz Sunnery? Head back to the crime scene. Wingate and I will head to the hospital.”

“What about the Britley and Robinson homicide?” Hancock asked.

“They’ll have to wait.”

They arrived at the hospital. They were told Ronnie Jones was still in critical condition. The next couple of hours were going to have a lot to do with his survival. They were told a couple of the slugs shattered and did considerable damage.

The girl, Liz Sunnery, was still in surgery. Her prognosis was still up in the air, too.

The third victim, Stan Collins, had a superficial wound to the shoulder. The bullet did not penetrate; it nicked him, a basic flesh wound.

Wingate asked, "Did anyone call his parents? They are coming down for the game."

"My partner did last night. The parents are coming today. They should be here soon," Lee said.

"The girl has a sister. Her parents are both dead. The desk is going to try to get the sister. They have an office number to call. They'll try about ten o'clock this morning, hoping someone is there."

They met Stan Collins in the emergency room. He was bandaged up. He was being held until one of his parents could get him. He was still in a slight state of shock. Lee asked him if he could answer some questions. He said he would try.

They asked the basic questions first. He was a high school senior who was visiting Pitt. He was from Mars, Pennsylvania. His parents were on their way to get him. He was visiting with his brother when he wanted to try a hot dog. His brother was back at the dorm.

"This car, did you recognize it?" Lee asked.

"No, ma'am."

"You're from Mars. Were you ever in a gang?"

"No."

"We don't think Stan was the target. At least from where the shots came from and were aimed," said Wingate. He continued, "Forensics is there and they have a computer-generated crime scene. I am sure Krispy and Bill have it for us."

"Did you know either of the two people shot?" Hancock asked.

"No, it was like a dream. I came out of the door. I see this black kid on one knee, then he springs up, grabs the girl, they seem to spin around and then my shoulder starts to burn. I hit the deck. The gun had to be like a machine gun. It was just *boom, boom, boom.*"

"I'm waiting on a call from university security. We gave them the name of the girl and boy; they were going to follow their procedure to inform the family. We know she is from Connecticut and she is a freshman. He is a football player and a freshman. I think his parents are here or were coming to the game," Wingate said.

Ronnie's parents arrived at the hospital. They were shown into the room the detectives were in. Introductions were made and Lee asked if she could talk to Mr. Jones in the hall. The Joneses explained that university security had called their cell number. They were staying at the Hilton Gardens.

In the hall, Lee asked, "I know these questions will sound terrible, but I must ask them." Mr. Jones nodded and said he understood.

"Do you think your son could be in a gang?"

"Detective, my son walked the straight and narrow. He played football, basketball, and baseball; this helped keep him off the streets. He also had a ninety-one overall average in his grades. He did not have time for gangs."

"Did he have enemies that might come here to hurt him?"

"I doubt it. This girl he was with? What about her?"

"We still are trying to find her family. Did you know she is white?"

"No, just a girl he was with. Is this a racial targeting?"

"Possible, and we are looking into that as well. Actually, we think one of them *was* the target. But we want to be careful about what we say at this point. The girl was in surgery and is still not available to us. And your son, also, is still not available to us."

"We know he is critical. God, who would shoot two college kids?" Mr. Jones's voice trailed off. Mrs. Jones was seated and sobbing.

Lee and Wingate left their cell phone numbers at the nurses' station. They wanted to know if either victim was awake to talk. When a nurse told them no, they headed back to the station.

Britley and Robinson left forensics at the bus stop and headed back to the station. It was going on 3 a.m. when they arrived. Hancock saw them come in to the office.

"Robbie, what's with your case?"

"White male about fifty. He was stabbed and shot. He has a California driver's license. His name is JJ Jans. We canvassed the area and found out he was staying at the Hilton Gardens on Forbes Avenue. We think he may have been down near your crime scene. And was going back to his hotel. I don't think

it was a robbery or a mugging gone wrong. Looks like a possible hit. He had his wallet and cash."

"Cap, thought it might connect to ours," Hancock said. "Is the body at the morgue yet?"

"Should be."

"Call and ask them to run a gunshot-residue check on him. We can rule him out of our shooting if it's negative," Hancock said.

Britley said he would call.

Lee and Wingate walked in as Britley was calling. Hancock gave them the rundown on Britley's case. It was now 3:15 a.m. Lee decided to call it a night. The others agreed to reconvene at 9 a.m.

Conte arrived in Pittsburgh at 3:35 p.m. He decided to go to university security, identify himself, and give them some details of his trip. He found the public safety building and went in. He asked to see someone in charge.

"I am Joseph Pulanski," one of the officers said to him. "How can I help you?"

"I am Blaise Conte." He pulled out his PI identification and showed it. "I am here to see a freshman girl. Her family wanted me to convey personal information to her. You've heard of the Sun-Sun Bakery?" He nodded yes and he listened.

"Well, I was hired by them to see her. Her name is Elizabeth Sunnery. I thought you could direct me to her dorm."

Pulanski's face went white. He signaled for another officer. The officer came up behind Conte and asked him to put his hands on his head. Conte at first was going to resist but thought better of it. They searched him and found the two birth certificates. They asked Conte to sit down.

"Mr. Conte, why do you have these?" Pulanski asked.

"It is a personal matter, dealing with the family."

"Mr. Conte, Elizabeth Sunnery is in the hospital, a victim of a drive-by shooting. She was shot last night. Do you have any knowledge why, or of who might want to kill her?"

Conte stiffened and tried to collect his thoughts. He decided to give them the whole story, with the condition it would be kept out of the newspapers. Meanwhile, the other officer had called the Pittsburgh Police and told Wingate to get over to the public safety building.

"I am a PI based out of New Jersey," Conte said. "I have licenses for New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Yesterday, Diane Sunnery came to my office. She had a concern regarding Elizabeth, whom they call Liz. Now, what I am going to tell you is not for the newspapers, agreed?"

"Mr. Conte, the Pittsburgh Police and us work together. We are the third-largest department in Allegheny County and we don't want to make deals. Tell us what you know."

"It concerns Liz being in a porno flick here on campus. There, I said it. I came here—"

"Stop right there. You have the right to be silent. Anything you say can be used against you," Pulanski said.

"Wait a minute. I am a retired NYPD cop. I know my rights. Now cut the shit."

"Mr. Conte, looking at these birth certificates, it appears you faked one to make the deceased look older than seventeen. We were told to be on the lookout for someone dealing in kiddie porn. Call that FBI guy; tell him we have his man. Mr. Conte, you're under arrest."

"Look, the fake birth certificate is the one to make her look younger. I was to try to get the video maker to destroy the tapes or whatever they used. I am a PI. Call the NYPD and ask for Justine Mayflower. She is my old partner."



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