

A Twisted Tale of Love

A DIANE
OF

RATS



Barton K Mann

A Diane of Rats

Barton K Mann

Published by Barton K Mann, 2019.

This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

A DIANE OF RATS

First edition. September 30, 2019.

Copyright © 2019 Barton K Mann.

Written by Barton K Mann.

For Diane of course

A Diane of Rats

Richard was still human, but just barely. Over the period of his forty-five years, he had been battered and beaten by circumstances often heinous and unforgiving. While some things had come to him as the result of his choices in life; other things, like her, just arrived out of the blue. So mostly he felt he was a victim of circumstance. And lately he had begun feeling like some sort of creature only resembling a man.

Then one day he discovered a glimmer of hope among the junk mail that grew like mold in his mailbox. It was an advertisement for career opportunities in pest control. Richard liked the idea. He could work alone, people would keep their distance, and he could kill things. Things that didn't deserve to live. Best of all he could kill rats.

Richard had a thing about rats. He despised them. He would go down to the bar at the bowling alley and drunkenly rant, "Rats! Vile creatures! You know they're considered disgusting pests by most of the world. I especially hate them! And here's the thing about rats, they come in a variety of forms. You have to be vigilant. You have to keep your eyes sharp! Take your squirrel for instance. A squirrel is just a rat with a furry tail. And pigeons? Just rats with wings."

And then he would add, "And then there are rats that are human. They look just like you or me, but they are rats just the same. They're despicable vermin walking around on two legs. I wasn't sure about this before, but then I met her. I thought she was human. I fell for her like a stone tossed in a well. She was all sweet and kissy and smart. She was pretty too. She was just about everything a man could want. But she was a rat just the same, and in every rat's heart there beats a bad song. They will tear your throat out while you're sleeping and dance on your grave. All rats are killers. Think about that the next time you go into a pet store and your kiddo asks if they could have one. Think about it the next time some dame sits next to you at a bar and lets you buy her a drink."

Richard applied for the exterminator job and got it. It wasn't a line of work that created much competition for openings. He was sent out on

job after job. Roaches, and bedbugs, and spiders, and ants, all of them fell victim to Richard's swift hand. He was good at killing things. He took pride in his work and thought, "I'm just as good at killing things as she was at killing our love."

But he became frustrated after six months because he hadn't had a chance to kill many rats. Sure a couple of times he laid out the traps, but they didn't really deliver the charge he wanted. He wasn't satisfied coming across a desiccated rat body stuck in glue, he wanted to catch the bugger live and dispose of it in real time.

He imagined holding one in his hands and squeezing it until its eyes would pop and its head would explode. Now that was a party. He had often thought about doing the same thing with her, the human rat. But she wasn't worth prison, and that left him with no choice but to wallow in his frustration. It had been months since he last saw her. Months since she walked out on him with no explanation. All he wanted was to understand, but she denied him that relief.

Richard's big chance finally came wrapped in the package of an industrial job. Here was a vast machine shop and warehouse looking to reopen after a hiatus. The rats had taken up residence during the dormant period of the business.

Richard estimated there were maybe six hundred to one thousand of them now. Running, and eating, and pissing, and fucking in this citadel of manufacturing. The pest company had given him an abundance of traps to set. Traps! He wasn't about to waste this opportunity on traps! He didn't plan on using poison gas bombs either.

Instead he brought weapons of physical destruction. He had guns, and blades, and even some grenades that he bought out of the trunk of a car from a seedy man in a dark parking lot.

He didn't want to waste the experience being on adrenaline alone, so he had stocked up on Ecstasy, Mushrooms, Dexedrine, and 190 proof Everclear.

He pulled up to the complex around 6:30 in the evening. He sat in his car silently, eating an egg salad sandwich and swilling booze. He also took two hits of the ecstasy, about 4 grams of mushrooms, and three Dexedrine. He waited until he began to feel it all kick in, elevating his senses. It was going to be an epic night.

He entered the building carefully. The moon was full that night, and it was casting long and eerie shadows through the skylights. Right away Richard could hear them scurrying. They weren't even trying to be stealthy. He cursed them and spit on the floor.

He had barely gone ten feet forward when he first heard it.

"Richard," a voice called. He ducked down. How somebody else could be there was a mystery to him.

"Who's there?" he yelled out, still moving deeper into the shop.

There was no answer, and after a while he decided he had hallucinated it. After all, the mixture of drugs and alcohol was intense. He felt something run over his feet and he jumped. He whipped a pistol out and shot at the ground. He didn't hear any squealing. He hated missing.

The moonlight wasn't enough, so he tried all the light switches he could find, but nothing happened. No light. "Fuck it," he said, "I'll kill you all in the dark."

"Richard," the voice called out again. It came from the far end of the shop. He peered into the shop but couldn't see more than rat shadows dashing about in the moonlight.

"Richard." This time he was certain he didn't hallucinate it. And this time he also knew it wasn't just any voice, it was her voice. He didn't understand it at first. It confused him. He drank another shot of Everclear while pondering the impossible. Then a big smile spread across his face. It didn't matter how she was there. All that mattered was that she was there. Finally she was there.

He walked past the shop floor into the employee lounge. There the lights worked. When they came on he saw rats running everywhere. They were on the floor, on the tabletops, and on the counters. He finally had

targets to aim at, and he was certain to hit some as there were so many. He began shooting and rat bodies started to explode in front of his eyes. It seemed glorious to him.

Then he switched to a machete. He started swinging and slicing and dicing. This was harder work but more visceral, and he savored the moment. An erection was full and pulsing in his jumpsuit.

He switched to a new gun and continued the carnage, working his way out of the lounge and through various small offices. He was painting the walls red.

“Richard?”

“Where are you?” he cried out.

There was no reply and that really pissed him off. It reminded him of the day she stopped talking to him. When she said, “I’m through,” on the phone and hung up. She stopped taking his calls, and when he occasionally managed to see her she wouldn’t answer any of his questions. She wouldn’t speak to him at all.

He kicked the door to the big warehouse open. The lights in this area worked sporadically and flickered on and off like some kind of crazy disco. He sprayed the entire scene with a massive amount of bullets. The sounds of endless ricochets sang their death song. He was barely aiming anymore. It didn’t matter much, the carnage was unbelievable.

“I’m in the basement Richard,” he heard her say.

He walked past rack after rack of raw materials, the stuff of manufacturing. The rats were there too but he paid no attention. He would deal with them later. After he dealt with her.

He reached the stairway to the basement. The doorway looked like a vault. It was rusted and hard to move, but he managed to push it open. The stairwell was dimly lit. The light blinked out just as he reached the bottom step. He pushed open the basement door.

“You here Diane?” he screamed. Spittle flew out of the sides of his mouth.

This was the darkest room yet. The lights didn't work. He could hear rustling and squeaking. It sounded like the rats were talking to each other.

Suddenly there was a glow in the room as if the moonlight had burst through the ceiling. He saw that right in front of him rats had started to pile up, climbing on each other's backs. The pile grew rapidly, and Richard took a step back. He was too shocked to raise his weapons.

The pile grew and a form began to take shape. It was her. A sloppy, wriggling, inaccurate version of her, but he knew it was her nevertheless. "I knew it," he said.

"We need to talk Richard," said the Diane of rats.

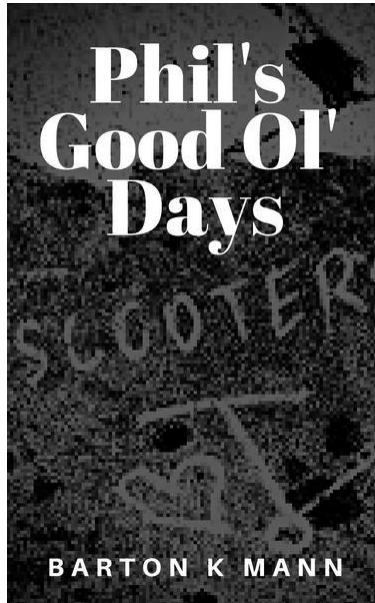
He heard the basement door close behind him. Then he felt a swarm of rats pile up against the back of his legs, pushing him slowly towards the figure, the Diane of rats. She opened her eyes and they were like shiny black pearls. Then she opened her mouth and there were three rows of chittering teeth.

"Come closer," said the Diane of rats. He dropped his weapons and fell to his knees. The rats were carrying him now as he sighed and thought, "At least she is talking to me again."

In the morning there was no sign of Richard or the Diane of rats. The building was entirely rodent free. The client was satisfied with the job.

Later that morning the pest control company put out another ad for personnel in the mail. They had positions to fill.

Did you love *A Diane of Rats*? Then you should read *Phil's Good Ol' Days* by Barton K Mann!



How many brilliant technological ideas away are we from total disaster? This is a story of one possible answer. Take a walk with Phil through a savage land of manicured lawns and death dealing conveniences. Phil's only true wish is to live long enough to have a past and some decent memories to go with it. But there are no guarantees in his world. His life hangs in the balance every moment, and death is just a few wrong steps away. Phil has the courage to survive, but will that be enough?

Read more at <https://bartonkmann.com>.

About the Author

Bart Mann spent 13 years as an entertainment journalist/columnist. During the process of interviewing actors and musicians the line between reality and fiction got plenty fuzzy. So he decided to define that line once and for all by writing fiction. He is only partly successful, as his fantastical stories still reek of reality, or a bent version thereof.

Read more at <https://bartonkmann.com>.