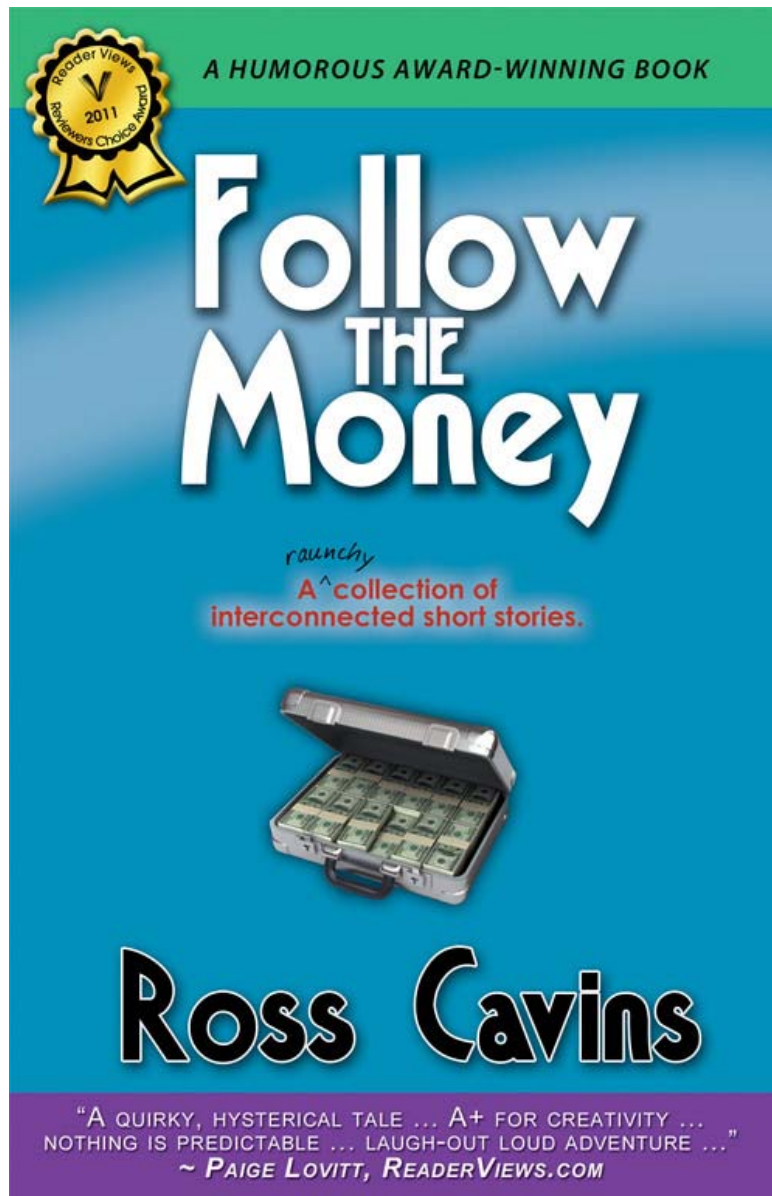


An Excerpt from



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#1

The Drop

THE GIRL WAS in the back room, asleep. Clint and Waylon sat in the kitchen, drinking beers at the little table Clint picked up at Goodwill last year for five bucks.

"Where we doin' it?" Waylon asked.

"I don't know yet." Clint scraped at the label from his Budweiser. He heard somewhere it gave you luck if you got it all the way off without tearing it. There had to be a trick to it. He'd figure it out, pull it off in one piece.

"I thought you had it all planned out."

"I do, just not all the little details."

"Little details? Where we do it is like one of the big details, ain't it?" Waylon turned up his beer, taking three big swigs one right after another.

"Hey!" came a muffled voice from the back room.

Clint took a drink from his beer. He looked at the label, half off now and not a tear yet, thinking that was a good sign.

"Hey!" The girl screamed again through the closed door. Waylon glanced at his younger brother, waiting for him to do something. Clint sat there in his chair, leaning back studying the label on his beer bottle like it was a winning lottery ticket and he just had to scratch the right boxes to win. The girl yelled again for somebody to come there.

"You gonna see what she wants?" Waylon finally said, fidgeting in his chair like a two year old that's got to go to the bathroom. Do number one.

Clint shrugged, keeping his eyes on his beer bottle. It was sweating pretty good now, making it easier to peel the label off but also making it just as easy to tear. "You go see what she wants."

* * *

WAYLON HESITATED, rocking back and forth, looking down at his beer. He finally slipped on his pantyhose mask just past his nose and left the kitchen, beer in hand. The floor of the trailer creaked in the hallway where it was rotting through. Clint said they had to replace part of the sub floor, whatever that was. But that wouldn't matter any more, they were getting a real house when this was over.

Waylon opened the door to the room just as the girl yelled one more time. "Whatcha want," he said, looking at her sitting on the bed, rubbing her left wrist, the one that was handcuffed to a chain wrapped around the bed frame.

"I gotta pee." She looked up at Waylon with her ocean-blue eyes, the ones that Waylon said to Clint made him uncomfortable like she could read his mind.

"Lemme go ask my brother."

"You have to check with him on everything? You go take a shit, you ask him if you can wipe your ass?"

Waylon's mouth dropped open. "No, I ... I gotta check with him ... he's got the key." He turned back toward the kitchen and yelled, "She's gotta pee."

"So let her pee," Clint yelled back. "What you asking me for?"

Waylon turned to the girl. She had an eyebrow raised and held her wrist out, the one with the handcuffs him and Clint bought at the Army Surplus downtown last week when they got the idea to do this.

"I gotta get the keys," he said. He came back a minute later with his beer in one hand and the keys in the other.

The first thing she did when he unlocked her was reach for his beer. Waylon's reaction was to jerk it back from her but he was too slow, her surprising him like that. She turned the bottle up while he looked at her, still unsure what he should do.

"You're too young to drink," he said finally.

"I am, am I?" she said as she took another swig, never breaking eye contact like they were in a staring contest.

"Yeah, yeah you are." Waylon didn't reach to get it back though.

"Well, you know what I think?" She turned the bottle up, finished it and handed it back to him. "I think I'm too young to be held captive against my will, what do you think?"

"I think you better get your smart little ass in the bathroom, is what I think," Clint said as he appeared in the doorway. Waylon and the girl turned to see him with his pantyhose stretched all the way over his head, a black Dale Earnhardt cap on top with a light halo surrounding a red number "three" embroidered in the center. He held his beer in his hand, the label missing except for a little corner hanging raggedy on the side.

The girl handed Waylon his empty bottle and shot Clint a look of defiance as she squeezed by. He didn't move out of the doorway when she passed.

"Why you let her talk to you like that?" Clint said to Waylon when the bathroom door closed.

"Like what?"

"Like she the one in charge, not you." Clint lifted his pantyhose and turned his beer up.

"Huh?"

"Whaddya mean, huh? She's just a kid, man, and you let her treat you like *you're* the kid."

"She don't talk like no kid."

"Are you kidding me?" Clint said smiling. "She's worse than Uncle Eddie when he gets to drinking with his construction buddies. And lemme tell you, that man knows how to cuss."

"And she don't act like no kid."

"You can say that again."

"And she definitely don't *look* like no kid."

"Yeah, you got that right." Clint's smile grew big and he made round motions in front of his chest. Clint almost whispered, "Don't seem right to put titties that big on a kid, does it?"

Waylon snickered and lowered his voice too. "How big you think them things are?"

"I don't know, but they bigger than Aunt Louise's, ain't they?"

Waylon thought about it, then said, "Yeah, I think so but you ever see Aunt Louise in a bathing suit?"

"Yeah., I know." Clint wrinkled his nose. "They's flabby with stretch marks but she still puts 'em out there for everyone to see. Bet the kid's don't look like that. Bet they's a lot nicer."

The sound of the toilet flushing shut them both up but they still sported childish grins when the girl came out of the bathroom. She wore a t-shirt that said Hilfiger and a pair of jeans so tight Waylon had to force himself not to look at her rear when she walked by.

Other Excerpts from Follow The Money

From "The Drop"

... Clint closed his eyes and pursed his lips, wondering if God wanted him to be the older brother, why he didn't go ahead and make him the older brother? ...

From "The Investment"

... That's what women that looked like her did. They never earned the money themselves, they stole it with a marriage certificate and a promise of amazing sex for the rest of your life. You paid for it one way or another ...

From "Sammy's Night Out"

... The dude with the gun was jerking his head back and forth, spinning around and trying to look everywhere at once. Sammy wondered if he'd ever done this before, stuck up a place, cause he didn't look too sure of himself ...

From "A Loaded Gun"

... Five seconds, that's all it took for Calvin to pop the lock. Fifteen more and he had it started, some Amy Grant crap coming out of the speakers. Junior sat there with his mouth open watching Calvin do his thing when he should have been watching for the owners coming out of the restaurant ...

From "Everybody's Got A Magic Number"

... He twisted at his waist, still stretching and looking like that curly-headed queer that sold the Oldies workout tapes his ex-wife always bought. She only used them a couple times, Dwayne said once, so her ass was still the size of Montana ...

From "Have Fun Tonight"

... The girl EMT gasped when she saw it, her eyes widening like she was in sixth grade seeing one for the first time, like they'd snuck in the girl's bathroom during library and he pulled it out just for her ...

From "Sweating Brother Bill"

... Now this preacher, Brother Bill, was up there in his preacher's robe, getting himself all worked up talking about lambs and daughters and patience and lust and sin, and it was getting Ruth and Agnes all worked up watching him sweat, picturing him in tight jeans and an unbuttoned shirt, gyrating to some loud bass beat that was so deep it shook the clasp on your wonder bra ...

From "Toe Thumb"

... As soon as she opened the front door, Frankie heard Fayrene neighing like a horse in heat. When Frankie got back to the bedroom, she saw Fayrene with her legs in the air, Harold between them giving it to her hard with nothing on but black socks ...

From "For The Road"

... Wally shrugged to himself and got out, pulling up his pants cause he never had a belt that was the right size. They were always too tight or too loose, never fit like the belts on the models in the JC Penny ads. Of course, JC Penny didn't have models with a gut and cowboy boots ...

From "Channel Ten"

... Talking about how he was raising money for America's youth, how they were coming up short on how much it was costing to build *Savior Land USA*, and if you could find it in your loving heart, send in twenty or forty or, God bless you a hundred or two, and they'd be able to construct the main attraction, the Screaming Tower of Babylon ...