

The Dirty Canoe

Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson

Published in July 2013 in *Revolver* Magazine

If it hadn't been for the ferret attack, we never would've gotten busted. This was supposed to be a real easy in-and-out kind of thing and the day had started off fine enough. We left Carson City at 6 a.m. and made good time so when we reached Pahrump I begged Pete to stop at the Golden Nugget for a few pops, but he just floored it.

"Banjo," he said, "Smoke a cigarette and shut it. We've got a whorehouse to get to."

Later, the police said Pete had a gun at the cash register, but they got it all wrong. There was no gun. It was a wrench. Which begs the question, I know: "You held up a whorehouse with a wrench?"

A hex wrench, to be exact. For putting together furniture. Pete still had it in his pocket after setting up the apartment for him and Sonia. But we weren't trying to rob anyone with it. I mean what idiot would try to take a till with a hand tool?

We'd gone to the Chicken Ranch to collect Pete's wife. She'd taken up residence there while Pete finished a nickel for possession with intent. Pete says Sonia got brainwashed or kidnapped. You know what I think? I think she got smart. Those gals don't pay rent, they don't cook, they don't do laundry, they just work the good gifts god gave them and make bank doing it. Sonia's always been real smart with money like that.

The plan was for the two of us to walk in, all casual, and for me to occupy the madam while Pete checked out the place. I guess I got distracted looking at the menu of services and never saw Pete go through that door marked "Private." You see, they got this one thing, it's called a Dirty Canoe. It'll run you like \$250 with tip, but it's got two gals, one's hanging from a portable rig, the other one's underneath and well, shit, that's a story for another day.

So next thing I know Pete's back and he's got Sonia and she's looking pissed. The madam starts yelling and she reaches behind her desk and—hand to god—hurls this goddamn rodent across the room. It's all Cujo'd up and hissing and shit and that fucker sinks its fangs right into Pete's arm. Now I've been through rabies shots once. Never again. I hightailed it out of there like I was escaping a burning fucking building.

So sure, I wasn't inside when the rest went down. But here's what I can't square with what the police are saying. A man goes to all that trouble to rent a nice

place. He buys a new couch and bloodies his finger putting together a dresser that he fills with new clothes, and then he drives 7 hours just to try and kill his wife and hold up a joint? It doesn't add up. I'm telling you, whatever happened in there had something to do with that rabid fucking ferret.