

*I* was swimming helplessly in a deep pool of darkness – one that seemed to have no bottom, sides or dimensions. High above that pool of blackness was a dim light, and it was getting brighter as I was being steadily pulled toward it - a slow and painful climb.

My senses and awareness were gradually returning with the struggle and getting stronger as I approached the light. However, I had no idea how long I had been swimming in this boundless pool of darkness - this pool of unconsciousness.

Someone had slipped me a ‘Mickey Finn’...a ‘Mickey’ as it’s known by those who stoop to such evil tactics. Perhaps chloral hydrate or something stronger, and it hit me hard – too hard. The nauseating taste of aluminum foil in my mouth was overwhelming, like I had eaten a whole roll of the disgusting stuff and was still chewing on some small left-over pieces.

My throbbing head was probably the results of a giant after-effect caused by the drugs, but somehow I believed there was more to my pain than just an oversize hangover.

Remaining still, eyes closed, I tried to determine if I had any additional injuries or broken parts to deal with. Other than an unending pounding in the back of my head, everything else seemed to be intact – maybe not working correctly, but still together.

My exact location was unclear, and my racing mind was trying to determine something from the unusual surroundings. I knew I was lying on some sort of unfriendly surface - cold and hard, like a tile floor. My right cheek was leaning against something equally cold, hard and unfriendly. And, judging from the rotten odors of urine and other bodily fluids that were stinging my nose, I guessed my place of captivity was likely on the floor of a dirty bathroom - with my cheek resting against a toilet bowl. Yes it was gross, but I suspected I had bigger problems than that.

Opening one eye, then the other – my first blurry view of the world was of the back of a dirty commode. The next view was worse.

The brightness in the room was painful to my eyes, but it did confirm my suspicions. I was lying on the floor of a toilet with my head resting between the wall and a stinking commode. It also offered a clear view of my captors.

Staring down at me were three people. A man on the left was short, stout and dressed in a three piece tan suit with an unlit five-dollar cigar resting in the corner of his mouth. His brown hair was combed back, revealing a large tan forehead, and a well-trimmed mustache sat above a large upper lip.

Standing in the middle of this trio was a tall blonde-haired woman, wearing red stiletto heels and with some type of fur jacket draped across her shoulders. From my view – lying on the floor and looking up – I didn't believe she was wearing anything else. In fact, I was absolutely sure of it!

On the right was a very large bald-headed black man dressed in a dark tuxedo and pointing my .38 revolver at my head. He wasn't smiling when he spoke.



"It appears that he's not dead yet. Should we shoot him here, or take him out to the dump and shoot him?"

"No," the man on the left answered with a crusty voice. "He's got some questions to answer first – then we shoot him."

"What a shame," the woman spoke with a soft voice and showing a small smile. "He's kinda' cute."

"What if he doesn't want to talk?" The black man with the gun responded.

The man on the left removed his cigar, looked at the man holding the gun and offered an evil grin to go along with an evil voice. "He'll talk – unless he wants to see that woman of his cut up into small pieces and fed to the fish. Then he can enjoy the same experience."

“Yeah,” the man with the gun laughed. “I’ve seen some of Smitty’s work. It ain’t never pretty, but always effective.”

“What a shame,” the woman spoke again – this time without smiling. “He’s kinda’ cute.”

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*M*y head was slowly clearing, and thoughts drifted back to the events that had put me in this awful mess. They were both complicated and surprisingly simple. Everything started with the horrible murder of a woman named Roxy Howard, and then the desperate pleas of a twelve-year old girl.

That was several days ago where our story begins.