

DICKY'S DINER

John Boston

Dicky's Diner was located in the thriving metropolis of Currant, Nevada. Dicky and his wife Marlene had been painstakingly restoring the motel for the last five years. He had gotten the bar and motel for next to nothing, then proceeded to dump their entire life savings to bring it back to life. From a financial point of view, what he did was insane. From a personal point of view, it was his lifetime achievement. Dicky had inherited around half a million dollars when his mother had passed. He drove past the motel one day on his way to Tonopah. As far as he was concerned, this was a no-brainer. He was going to restore this masterpiece *one nail at a time if necessary*.

There was nothing around the diner for miles. Literally nothing, except for a refinery about twenty miles down the road. Currant was pretty much a ghost town. He had a grand opening that was attended by a total of four people, all of whom were tourists from the Netherlands.

Dicky and Marlene couldn't afford to hire anyone, so the diner and motel had rather irregular hours. There was no internet available and phone service was limited at best. Things hadn't changed very much over the last fifty years in that particular neck of the woods. There was *a whole lot of nothing in Currant and that's just the way he liked it*.

Frank Metcalf had lived in Currant for the last fifteen years. He was still pretty much a newbie as far as the locals were concerned. His parents had decided to buy a hay farm and somehow had convinced Frank to join in on their adventure. None of them knew anything about growing hay and the first two seasons were nothing short of a disaster. They had lost thousands when an early frost killed most of their crop. It was feast or famine in farming. They didn't even know what crop insurance was at the time of planting. Frank had learned how to drive a commercial truck to deliver the hay and take apart a diesel engine and put it back together. He was becoming a farmer, one day at a time.

Frank had become friends with Dicky and his wife and spent most of his evenings in the diner, where it was usually just the two of them. Once in a while, they would have other customers, but most nights, it was just the two of them. Marlene had decided to keep their house in Reno and would spend her free time there when she had enough of her husband. Frank couldn't make any sense of their marriage. She clearly had other ideas as to how to spend her husband's inheritance.

"Dick, I gotta admit, your food is almost becoming edible," said Frank as he ate a bowl of Dick's chili.

"Wait till you see what I can do to a hot dog," he said.

"I almost feel sorry for that poor hot dog."

"All we need now are some customers and I'm in business."

Frank heard the front door open and was none too happy about who came in.

Sgt. Mike Nyestrom in the White Pine County Sheriff's Office was the man in charge when it came to law and order in this part of the state. He was a strict law and order type of officer, with a heavy emphasis on the law and order part. He and Frank had nearly come to blows one evening when he pulled Frank over for speeding. It was on a deserted farm road and it ended with Frank getting arrested and thrown in jail. The case was dismissed, but the bad blood between the two of them had not gone away. Frank couldn't stand him and he was pretty sure the feeling was mutual. Frank had to wonder what idiot had decided to promote him to sergeant.

"Hi Frank," he said without looking at him.

"Mike."

"What's good Dick?"

"Got my homemade chili. Frank is on his second bowl," he said and brought over a bowl for Mike.

"You got any crackers?"

"Right here," he said and brought over a plate of oyster crackers.

"Dicky, this is outstanding. Did Marlene make this?"

"Nope, the old girl is in Reno for the time being. If I'm lucky, she might just stay there."

"Problems on the home front?" asked Mike as he ate his chili

"Nope, just the usual love-hate relationship we find ourselves in. Say, would I really got prison if I killed her?" asked Dicky

"Only if you get caught."

"Yeah, I don't think I would make a very good criminal. I tried it once. Got caught shoplifting in the eighth grade. My dad whooped me so badly, I never got over it."

"Well, that's what good dads do."

"He was a cop too, did I ever tell you that?"

"Yeah, about a dozen times," said Mike as Dicky poured him a cup of coffee.

"How's the hay business, Mike?"

"It's okay I guess. Farming is a hell of a lot of work for not really much money. That's probably why no one does it anymore."

"Yeah, I tried it once myself. Not for me. I need action, you know. I get bored easily." said Mike.

"Hey Frank, what the hell happened up in Austin a few weeks ago?" asked Dicky

"Fucking horror show. Some family from Las Vegas decides to go camping for a weekend and they get murdered. It's not our county, so I can't do much. They even called in the FBI."

"I heard the family had guns with them and they still got killed. That true?"

"They found dozens of shell casings near the camper. They must have put up a hell of a fight. The husband and wife were cut to pieces. The son and daughter are still missing. You guys might want to carry your guns with you when you're out checking the fence line."

"Do they think what happened up there is related to those missing girls from Germany?"

"Could be. The consensus now is that there had to be a group of people involved. No way one person could have done all this. They found motorcycle tire marks in the dirt near the camper. When they followed them, they just vanished into the desert. Really weird."

"What missing girls?" asked Dicky

"A couple of months ago, two girls from Germany were traveling around the US. They texted their parents that they were staying in a campground off of US 6, near the reservoir. That's the last anyone ever heard from them. We're investigating, but there's not much to investigate. No evidence of a crime at their campsite. It's like they just vanished. We found their van down the road, but they weren't in it."

"I moved out here to get away from all that crap. Here I am, right in the middle of it," said Dicky.

"It's not just that. Old Fred Williams, who owns that ranch about ten miles down the road said a bunch of his cattle are missing. Who the hell steals cattle nowadays? Something like that should be pretty easy to track. We didn't find anything."

"So, you think it's just a bunch of psychos traveling around and murdering people? That's pretty disturbing," said Frank.

"We found the same motorcycle tracks at the girl's campsite. Same thing, they just disappeared."

"I guess if you were going to do something like that, this would be the perfect place to do it. Just miles and miles of nothing out here. You can disappear out here for days. I remember that little Indian girl who got lost. It took us over a week to find her. She had made herself a hut and was filtering water from a stream. She had more brains than the rest of us who were looking for her."

"We've had helicopters and drones scouring the area, looking for anyone on a motorcycle. So far, we haven't found a damn thing. It's frustrating, let me tell you. I'd love to shoot the son of a bitch who's doing all this."

The door to the cafe opened in walked a man whose appearance was definitely cause for alarm. His shirt was ripped and he hobbled when he walked. They were nice clothes at one time. He

said nothing as he walked by the men and sat down in a booth. Dicky walked over to the man to take his order.

"Do you want to see a menu?"

"What?"

"A menu? You want to see a menu?"

"No.....just bring me coffee, black with no creamer. Make sure it's hot," he said with his hands shaking.

"You okay there bud?"

"I'm fine. Just bring me the coffee please," he said.

Dicky walked away and looked over at Mike as he got the man his coffee.

"I didn't hear a car pull up," said Mike.

"Well, I don't think he walked here," replied Frank.

Mike walked over to the man and stood over him as Dicky brought his coffee. The man eagerly sipped his coffee as his hands trembled.

"Sir.....are you okay?" asked Mike.

"I'm fine."

"You certainly don't look fine. What happened to your clothes?"

"Oh, that. Yes, that was unfortunate. I'm fine now. Please leave me alone."

"Look, if you're in trouble, maybe I can help?"

"I doubt that very much."

"How do you know unless you try? I've helped a lot of people who were in tough spots."

"Is there a phone around here? I need to make a call."

"No phone service out here unless you have a satellite phone."

"I see. That's probably why they chose this area. 911 won't do you much good if you can't make the call."

"What are you talking about?"

"Is that the only gun you have?" asked the stranger

"I have a shotgun out in the car....why?"

"You might want to go and get it.....*and quickly*." said the man sipping his coffee.

Mike walked back over to Frank and Dick.

"What's going on?" asked Dick

"I don't know. Something's not right here. This guy is up to his eyeballs in shit. I can't do anything unless he wants to talk. I just wish he would give me something."

"Why did he tell you to get your shotgun? That's kind of weird," said Frank.

The calm silence of the high desert was broken by the sound of distant rumbling. The men walked over to the window and could see a dozen or so motorcycles pull into the dirt parking lot in front of the diner. It was hard to see in the dark. The bikes were all parked in a line. The leader of the gang gave a hand signal and the engines were all turned off.

"You ever seen a motorcycle club on the road after dark?" asked Dick.

The stranger ran over to the window and stared outside. He was shaking badly now.

"Mister, if you know something, now would be a very good time to tell me," said Mike.

"I told you to get your shotgun. Why didn't you listen to me?"

"Did these people do this to you?" asked Frank

"Yes.....I escaped. My boyfriend, Carlton.....they killed him. They're a bunch of animals."

"Well, I've heard enough."

"Ely, this is south four. I need assistance at Dicky's Diner in Currant, ASAP." he said into his microphone on his shirt."

"Ely, do you copy?"

"Ely, this is south four.....Ely.....what the hell is going on with this radio?"

The diner suddenly went dark. The only light they had was the moonlight. It was a full moon. The lights in the parking lot were solar LEDs,. They were still working.

"You better not be lying to me, bud," said Mike as he unholstered his 9mm.

"Mike, you're not going out there," said Dicky.

"I'm a cop, that's what we do. I need backup before I can do anything. I'm going to go out to my cruiser and try the radio. I've never had radio problems before out here."

"You want us to go with you?" asked Frank

"No.....you guys stay here. Dicky, do you still have that shotgun under the counter?"

"How did you know about my shotgun?"

"I'm a cop, it goes with the territory."

"Yeah, I got it. Go get it, make sure it's loaded," said Mike.

Dick ran back to the counter and pulled out his sawed-off shotgun. He put two rounds of buckshot in it.

"Never thought I'd actually have to use this thing. I don't even know if it works."

Four of the men walked up to the front steps of the diner. They opened the door and walked in.

"Howdy? You guys open?" said the biker.

Dick looked at Mike, who just nodded.

"Sure. Do you want to see a menu?"

"Yeah, why not."

The bikers didn't look rough or salty. They looked more like accountants who liked to pretend they were bikers. Frank felt a little more at ease.

The men didn't even look at the man with the ripped shirt as they walked by. Dicky brought out some menus.

"Can I get you some coffee?"

"Not for me. I have coffee now I'll never get to sleep. Jens here likes coffee." said a biker.

"I'll take a sprite please." said another biker.

"Two sprites?"

"Make it three? What's the special tonight?"

"Homemade chili. Two bucks a bowl," said Dicky.

"Can't beat those prices. I guess it's chili all around."

"Coming up."

Frank and Dicky looked nervously at one another. This was clearly uncharted territory for both of them. Mike walked over to the stranger who was hiding in the corner.

"What's your name?"

"Evan Pritchard."

"Evan, are you certain these are the men that killed your boyfriend?"

"Well, I can't say with a hundred percent certainty. It was very dark. I would recognize the motorcycles if I saw them. One of them had a doll's head on his handlebars."

"Well, let's go outside and have a look," said Mike.

The two of them walked outside. Sure enough, there were motorcycles with doll heads on them.

"There it is. I'm sure now."

"Lots of bikers put them on their bikes. I'm going to need more than that. Do you recognize any of the faces?"

"No, it was dark and they moved so fast.....*I've never seen anyone move that fast.*"

"Don't you go anywhere Evan, I've got to get to the bottom of this. Do you have any idea where you were when you were attacked?"

"We were at a rest stop a few miles from here. I got out to use the bathroom. I don't know where they came from. I didn't see anyone else there. When I came out, they were dragging poor Carlton out of our car. I wanted to help him, but I was so scared. I tore my shirt in the bushes as I ran. I thought I was going to have a heart attack."

"Evan, I can't go just blindly accusing someone of murder without some kind of evidence. I sure as hell don't want to let a bunch of killers just slip right through my fingers. Besides, if they were guilty, I doubt very much they would stop in here. Doesn't make any sense." said Mike.

"Oh, it makes perfect sense, Mr. Mike. They might be psychopaths, but they aren't stupid. I would want to look as normal and as harmless as possible. Let everyone think you're no threat. The worst kind of evil often hides in plain sight." said Evan.

"Evan, you better not be lying to me. I can get into a whole hell of a lot of trouble. I'm going to call for backup before I start busting heads. If these guys are as nasty as you say they are, this could get ugly.....*and very quickly.*"

Mike managed to get cell service on his phone. He called the dispatcher and didn't even get to say hello before she interrupted.

"Mike, where the hell are you? We had a shooting at that mine near Baker about an hour ago. One of the employees opened fire and killed two of his co-workers. He took off into the desert. We've got everyone out there looking for him." she said.

"I wish I could help. I've got my own mess down here at that diner in Currant. I might have a solid lead on that mystery biker gang that's been killing people. They're all right here at the diner. I'm going to need backup."

"The only person I have is that tribal cop from Duckwater."

"Him? I'd be better off alone?"

"He's all we got. He can be there in half an hour."

"Have him check out that rest stop just south of Currant. Tell him there might be a dead body out there," said Mike.

"I can call NHP and see if they can send out someone from Tonopah."

"At this point, I'll take any help I can get. I'll call you back as soon as I know something."

"Officer Mike, I realize I'm not a cop, but even you have to see it is almost impossible for another biker gang with the same doll heads on their bikes to be out here in the middle of nowhere at night at the exact time and place where Carlton was attacked. The odds are astronomical. It's them, I'm sure of it. The only reason I'm still alive is because they didn't see me. My weak bladder saved my life."

"Alright. There's no telling what these guys will do once they realize they're caught. We back them into a corner and it could get ugly."

"It already is ugly, Mike. These bastards killed my boyfriend right in front of me," he said with tears in his eyes.

Mike walked into the diner and motioned for Dick and Frank to come over.

"Okay, guys. This is it. This could get mighty unpredictable. If these are the same guys, there's no way they're going to go quietly," said Mike.

"I've got two rounds of buckshot ready for the first one that makes a move," said Dick.

"I just hope it doesn't come to that. It didn't look like any of them are carrying, but you never know."

Mike walked over to the bikers, who were enjoying their meal. They certainly didn't look like homicidal maniacs.

"Hi," said Mike.

"What can we do for you officer?"

"Gentlemen, we have a problem here. Do any of you recognize this man?" he asked, pointing to Evan.

The men just shook their heads.

"He and his boyfriend were traveling on US 6 a few hours ago. He says they pulled over at a rest stop a few miles south of here and were attacked by a motorcycle gang. He says he is almost certain his boyfriend was killed. He was in the restroom and managed to escape without being seen."

"What does that have to do with us?" asked one of the bikers.

"There are two bikes out there with doll heads on them. He is certain those same two bikes were used in the attack."

"Whoa there due, we didn't attack anybody. We stopped there and saw a car with a smashed window. Looked like something pretty bad happened there but there's no cell service out here. We didn't have anything to do with it."

"You goddamn liar!" said Evan

"Evan.....let me handle this. Look, this is a very serious accusation. He said it was definitely a motorcycle gang that attacked his boyfriend. This isn't the first time this has happened. We've had other attacks in this area by people using motorcycles." said Mike.

"Jesus man, are you really serious? You think if we did something like that, we'd just come into the diner and sit down to eat?" said another biker.

"I don't know, would you?"

"This is insane. We didn't kill anybody. We're on our way to a wedding in Ely for one of our brothers. I don't know who this guy is and I've never seen him before in my life."

"Were you all together?"

"Yes, we stopped to use the restroom. We definitely did not murder anyone while we were stopped."

"I'm going to need to see your IDs."

"Man, fuck this. I ain't got time for this." said one of the bikers as he got up. He pushed his way past Mike, only to be shoved back in his seat by Frank.

"Sit down asshole. Pull out your IDs," shouted Frank.

"Who the fuck are you? Put your hands on me again and you're dead." said the biker he pushed.

"He's a reserve deputy. I have probable cause to arrest all of you. There's an easy way we can do this, or a very difficult one. It's your choice." said Mike. He just had to hope and pray that they didn't call his bluff. He didn't want the rest of these guys to know he was completely alone.

"We didn't kill anyone officer. I'm not lying, I'm just finding this all very hard to believe." said one of the bikers.

"We had a family ripped to pieces not too far from here. All they found were the limbs. The only survivor said it was a motorcycle gang that did it." said Mike.

"Sounds like we should get lawyers." said a biker.

"Only if you're guilty," said Frank

Mike took several IDs and had the dispatcher run all their names through ICS. None of them had any outstanding warrants. One had a DUI conviction fifteen years ago. Another had a misdemeanor charge of trespassing. They were either very good and had never been caught, or were certainly not career criminals. Mike handed the men back their IDs.

"Let's go outside and have a look at these bikes," said Mike.

He and Frank and Evan walked over and inspected the bikes. Frank checked out the ones with the doll heads. He hit pay dirt.

"Mike, take a look at this."

Mike walked over and looked at what Frank had found. He saw a clear blood stain on the wheel fender of the back tire.

"What the hell is that?"

"I ran over a bunny. I didn't know that was a crime." said the biker.

Mike walked over to the road captain of the gang.

"What's your name?"

"George Miller."

"Mr. Miller, we have a bunch of very unusual coincidences here, wouldn't you agree?" asked Mike.

"Jesus man, he ran over a bunny. He's lucky the damn thing didn't destroy his bike."

"I'm going to have to hold the bike and make sure the blood is not human. I'm sorry, I can't let you guys go until we get this resolved."

"This is bullshit! We didn't kill anyone officer! We just stopped there to use the bathroom." said a biker.

Mike walked over to the biker. He was not too impressed.

"I had to go to that crime scene and help collect the body parts. Have you ever had to do anything like that? Yeah, I didn't think so. Look, the test takes a few minutes. The test comes back and the blood isn't human, you guys are free to leave. Until then, you're staying here. You can stay in the motel if you like."

"This is unbelievable! One guy's word versus all of ours and you believe the one guy?"

"It's not just his word. A motorcycle gang was clearly involved in another murder out here and possibly others. Before Evan even saw the bikes, he said two of them had doll's heads on them, which these two bikes have. The same bikes have a blood stain on them. That's enough probable cause to hold you guys for further investigation."

"Are we under arrest?"

"Do you want to be? That means I put you in jail up in Ely. You cooperate with me and we can avoid all that."

"What do you want to do George?" asked a biker.

"Look, Mike. You have all of our names. You know where we all live. We can't miss this wedding and if we stay here, we will. This gang won't be too hard to find in some little town like Ely. So, unless we're under arrest, we're leaving, cause none of us had anything to do with this murder or any other murders out here."

"You don't make that call, I do."

"Stop with the John Wayne bullshit, cop. I was in Iraq for sixteen months and so were Davy and Luke. You ain't impressing us one bit." said another biker.

Mike walked up to him and looked him right in the eye.

"I was in Iraq too. I was also in Afghanistan and Yemen. You ain't impressing me either. You want to get into a dick measuring contest with me, I can guarantee you're going to come up a few inches short." said Mike.

"Everyone...relax, count to ten. Evan, I'm sorry for what happened to your boyfriend, I really am. We had absolutely nothing to do with it. You got the wrong guys." said George.

"Wouldn't you just want to clear all of this up? It would be a hell of a thing to have your names splattered all over the media, especially if you're innocent?" added Evan.

"We are innocent. That's the problem," said George

Mike's phone rang. It was Deputy Ironhorse from the reservation.

"Mike, I didn't find the body, but out behind the rest stop, I found clothes and a whole lot of blood. Something really bad happened here. I want to find the body before the coyotes get to it."

"Alright, call dispatch and let them know what you found," said Mike

"Okay, we got ourselves a crime scene. Nobody goes anywhere. I'm taking your keys, hand them over." said Mike.

"Not going to happen. Let's get out of here. You know where to find us." said George

Mike could get the overwhelming sensation that things were about to go south out here. He desperately needed backup, but that wasn't going to happen. He wasn't sure if they thought Frank was a deputy or not. He had to get this situation under control.

Before any of them could mount up, Dick jumped forward and fired two rounds from his shotgun into the tires of the bikes, sending the rubber and wheels flying. The biker gang stood in shock. He quickly reloaded.

"Officer Nyestrom says you're not leaving, you're not leaving. Now, hand over the keys."

The biker's shock quickly wore off. They were not in shock anymore. The look on their faces was something else. Mike saw it once before when he was involved in a shooting.

It was the look of pure, unadulterated rage.

"I'm gonna kill you old man!" said one of the bikers as he lunged at Dicky.

Before Mike could even react, Dicky squeezed the trigger, sending the biker flying backward. Another biker took out a pistol and shot Dicky in the shoulder, causing him to drop the gun. Frank grabbed it and shot the biker.

"STOP SHOOTING, JESUS CHRIST!" shouted Mike as he dove for cover.

He grabbed two bikers that were trying to get on their bikes to escape. Another biker hit him with a metal pry bar, knocking him to the ground. Frank put more shells in the gun and continued firing at the bikers.

Mike was barely conscious as he watched Frank get shot by the bikers. He was on the ground and fired the shotgun once more, hitting George in the leg and blowing off a piece of it. Mike took out his weapon and started shooting at the bikers. He was shot once in the arm and once in the foot. He managed to get to the relative safety of his cruiser and took out the shotgun. Another bullet came through the windshield and hit him in the shoulder. He shot the man with his shotgun through the windshield. He was bleeding badly and could barely hold the radio as he called for help.

Well shit Officer Mike, this situation deteriorated rather quickly. He thought to himself. In a matter of just two minutes, things had gone from normal to a horror show. Two goddamn minutes was all it took.

"Fuck you, officer Mike. Goddamn cops are always trying to spoil our fun." said one of the bikers as he pointed his gun at Mike's head through the window.

Mike closed his eyes and waited for the bang. Instead, all he heard was a thud, and saw the man drop to the ground. Evan had hit him with a tire iron.

"All units, officer needs assistance. We need assistance in Currant. Hurry." said Evan as he grabbed the microphone with the radio.

Mike limped out of his vehicle. His vest had saved his life, but he was still in bad shape. The remaining bikers raised their hands and were surrendering.

"Don't shoot us!" they screamed.

"Get on the goddamn ground with your hand out in front of you! You move and I'll blow your goddamn head off!"

"I told you it was them, Mike. I told you!" said Evan.

Mike ran over to Frank and Dick, they were both dead.

He picked his head up as he heard the sound of motorcycles coming down the road. There seemed to be dozens of them. They pulled into the diner and began circling around Mike and Evan. The leader of the pack stopped and turned off his bike. The rest of the gang did the same.

"What the hell is this?" asked Mike.

"I don't know. I thought this was all of them."

The leader took off his helmet. He barely looked old enough to ride a motorcycle.

"Jesus, what the hell happened here?"

"This is a crime scene. The other officers will be here shortly."

"No Mike, no they won't. There won't be anyone coming to save you. You're all mine now." he said smiling.

"Look kid, I've killed a bunch of people here today, I don't mind killing one more," he said aiming the shotgun at the man. He just laughed as the other bikers dismounted and formed a circle around him. As some of them took off their helmets, Mike was horrified to see their faces. They were hideous....beyond hideous.....*almost like they were half dead.*

"Um.....Mike, I may have made a slight mistake," said Evan quietly

"What are you talking about?"

"I thought they were doll's heads on the bikes. I was wrong. *They're little baby skulls.*" said Evan as he nervously pointed to some of the bikes.

"Oh shit," said Mike quietly.

"I wonder how loud you can scream Mike? How about we find out?" said the man as he grabbed the shotgun from Mike.

"How do you know my name?" asked Mike

"I've been watching you for quite a while. We're going to give you a night to remember."

"Huh?"

"Oh look, we have some more guests at our little party," he said walking over to the bikers who were sprawled out on the ground.

"*This party is just getting started.*" said the leader. As he smiled, Mike could see that most of his teeth were rotted out. It was the most hideous smile he had ever seen.

Mike had shot the wrong gang. He was going to pay dearly for his little mistake. He just had to hope they killed him quickly. He didn't think he would do very well under torture.

"Now, which ones do we kill first.....I wonder?" said the leader as he smiled at Mike.