

Shooting Dogs for Fun and Profit

by Alex Wilson

The knob's busted. Greg pops the door with the heel of his hand. Bob says they should make a movie version of his life. Greg tells him to shut up.

They walk around the empty apartment, listening for squeaks in the floorboards. It's a one-room studio. Disposable. There's a couch and some empty plastic cups on the carpet. There's a coverless magazine sitting on the toilet seat. There's Bob who says Brad Pitt should play him in this movie.

"Brad Pitt?" Greg says. "Fuck you, Brad Pitt."

"What? You think he's too old?"

"Think he's too smart," Greg says. "This'll work."

They go back into the hall, down the backstairs to the first floor garage. They bring both bodies to the elevator. It's two o'clock in the morning. The elevator's quick. They see nobody. The bodies are wrapped in garbage bags. Their legs are tied together to keep them from flopping around. But they still look like bodies.

"Brad Pitt," Greg says again as the elevator doors close.

"I mean: what the fuck, Bob?"

"What?" Bob says. "We got the same dimples."

"What do you know about Brad Pitt's dimples?"

"I know he's got 'em," Bob says. The elevator door opens on the eighth floor. The floor's empty. They're lucky. "Doesn't he?"

They drag both bodies to the busted door. They bring both bodies inside the studio apartment. They tear off the garbage bags. There's a five dollar bill falling out of the woman's pocket.

"Dibs," Bob says. He takes the five. He smiles at Greg. Then he checks the other pockets. They already got rid of the wallets and phones, but he finds a ball-point pen. He tries to scribble on the five dollar bill. The pen doesn't work. He pockets the five. He puts the pen back in the woman's pocket.

"On the couch," Greg says. "Brad Pitt's dimples. Fuck you."

They pick up the first body. The guy. Bob collapses into a sitting position under it as they set it on the couch. The body's head ends up face down in Bob's lap.

"Hey," Bob says.

"What?" Greg says.

The head in Bob's lap has short and greasy hair. The face is in Bob's crotch. Bob's arms are outstretched, and he rotates his wrists in little circles.

"I think he likes me," says Bob.

"Maybe he thinks you're Brad Pitt," Greg says.

"Could be. Hey, who's your favorite Olsen twin?"

"The fat one," Greg says. He unties the rope around the body's calves. But the legs are stiff. Just because they can fall limp now, doesn't mean they will. "What's up with your wrists?"

"Nothing," Bob says. He pushes his palms together like he's praying. "Had to punch in this guy's windshield is all. You shoulda seen me."

"I shoulda seen you?"

"Yeah, like Brad fucking Pitt in what s-it-called." With both hands, he lifts the head out of his crotch. He rises off the couch. He makes a punching motion in the air. "What's it called?"

"Yeah," Greg says. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"His dog bit me. So I had to, you know?" Bob says. He pulls the body up into a sitting position. Greg hands him a cigarette. Bob puts it in the body's mouth. It looks like it's about to fall out. So he pushes it in farther along the outside of his teeth until it's almost completely submerged behind his lips.

"You couldn't punch in the dog's windshield instead?"

"Nah, it's the owner's fault," Bob says. "You never blame the dog for something like that. Used to be: I get bit, I shoot the dog. But it's not their fault nobody trained them right."

"You been bitten a lot?"

"Nah," Bob says. He picks at a pimple on his neck. It starts to bleed. "How much is a lot?"

Greg nods at the body on the couch. "You know who this is, right?"

Bob looks at the face. The body's eyes are closed. The cigarette's stuffed deep into his mouth, like he's the type to gnaw on a toothpick. He has a big, punchable chin.

Bob's mouth drops open suddenly. He balks at Greg. "It's not Brad Pi--"

"No, it's not Brad Pitt, you fucking idiot."

"I was gonna say," Bob says. "Because he doesn't look anything like him."

"It's Andrew White," Greg says.

"Holy shit."

"Yup."

"Andrew White?" Bob says. "Holy. Shit."

"Can you believe it?"

"Andrew White," Bob says again. He shakes his head. "How do I know that name?"

"High school," Greg says. "A year ahead of us? Kinda weird? His mom was a dentist or oral something. Always gave out toothbrushes at Halloween?"

"Holy shit," Bob says.

"Remember him now?"

"I do," Bob says. "I remember this guy."

"Well there you go."

"We had gym class," Bob says. "I've seen his wiener. Damn that's weird. His name was Tim something."

"Andrew," Greg says.

"Right," Bob says. "Tim Andrews."

"Andrew White."

"Yeah! Yeah, that's right. Wow. I knew him." Bob touches Andrew's cheek. Then he exaggerates a frown in his own mouth. He curls his bottom lip and juts his chin forward. He makes his voice airy in the way he thinks Marlon Brando's voice was airy. "I knew him, Horatio," he says. He laughs. Then he says in his normal voice: "You remember that? From The Godfather?"

"That's not from The Godfather," Greg says.

"Oh, I think it is," Bob says. He laughs again. He resumes his Marlon Brando voice: "I knew him, Horatio. Hasta la vista, baby." He internalizes his laugh by slapping his leg. "Remember that?"

"Sure," Greg says. "From The Godfather."

"He smells like chlorine," Bob says.

"Be thankful," Greg says. "He's been dead a day." He points to the other body, the one on the floor. "You ready for number two?"

"She's not the dentist, is she?"

"What?" Greg says. "No, it's not his mother."

"You sure?"

"Yeah, you don't know her."

"I might."

"You don't."

"I know, but I might," Bob says.

"No."

They pick up the body. They put it on the couch next to Andrew White.

"I think I know her," Bob says. He wipes his hands on his thighs as though the body is dusty. "How do I know her?"

"Where's the can?" Greg says.

"On top of the car," Bob says.

Greg looks at him.

"Oh," Bob says. He leaves the apartment.

Greg touches the second body's cheek. It's cold. Her name was Candice.

"Sorry, baby," Greg says.

"I smell like chlorine?" Candice says. She scrunches up her nose.

"Bleach, actually," Greg says. "Don't look at me like that."

Candice glances at the body next to her. "Why couldn't I get caught with a cute one?" she says. "This one guy? I swear, he was a dead ringer for--"

"I don't want to hear it," Greg says.

"I don't want to hear it," Candice says, her voice high-pitched and mocking.

Bob returns with the gas can. "Did she have a cat?"

"Did who?" Greg says. He looks at Candice. "No. I don't know."

"I think she had a cat," Bob says.

"I think he's right," Candice says. "I think I had a cat. What do you suppose it means that he knows that? Or that you don't?"

"Why'd anyone want to kill Andrew White, you think?" Bob says.

"Wrong place," Greg says.

"Wrong time?" Bob says.

Greg shrugs. "It's a wrong enough place, then time don't matter."

"You do it?" Bob says. He nods toward the bodies.

Greg shrugs again. Then he says: "Nah."

"Were you there?"

Greg doesn't answer. He makes a beckoning motion at the can. "Give it here."

"Hey," Bob says. "I know her."

"You don't, I said."

"But maybe he does," Candice says.

"You don't."

"I do."

"He does."

"I banged her," says Bob.

"You what?"

"He banged me," says Candice.

"I totally banged her," says Bob.

"He was very thorough," says Candice.

"Before she died," says Bob.

"Yes," Candice says slowly, like she has to think about it.

"I'm pretty sure it was before I died."

"You didn't bang her," Greg says. "She wouldn't have."

"I wouldn't have?"

"Oh, she would have," Bob says.

"Huh," Candice says. "Then who was it?"

"And she did have," Bob says.

Candice shrugs. "It must have been Brad Pitt."

"You shoulda seen me," Bob says.

"Because, you know. Brad Pitt?" Candice says. "That's likely."

"I shoulda seen you?" Greg says.

"So why don't you go shoot Brad Pitt now, you paranoid piece of shit?"

Andrew looks up. He points his cigarette stub at Bob. He

mumbles, sounding like Marlon Brando: "That's not Brad Pitt?"

"I know," says Candice. "Looks just like him, doesn't he?"

"Dimples," Andrew and Candice say together.

"I know," says Candice. She laughs.

"That's weird," Bob says. "It's weird she's dead now. And I've seen his wiener."

"Wow. I guess I've seen everybody's wiener," Candice says.

Greg takes the cap off the gas can. He pours the contents over the couch. He soaks the two bodies. He squints at the fumes.

"He was a nice guy," Bob says.

"Who?" Greg says. He sets the can down by the door so they won't forget it.

"Tim," Bob says.

"Andrew," Greg says.

"Yeah," Bob says. "He was a good guy."

"You banged him too?"

"No, I haven't seen him since high school."

"You shoulda kept in better touch then."

"So what about you?" Bob says.

"What about me what?"

"Who'd play you? In the movie version?"

"This oughtta be good," Candice says.

"I don't know," Greg says. He lights a cigarette. "I never punched in some asshole's windshield. Never got bit by no dog."

"You don't have to get bit," Bob says. "It's not a real question. It's a rhetorical."

"I'd play me," Greg says.

"You can't play yourself."

"You self-centered fuck."

"Excuse me?" Greg says.

"I didn't say anything," Bob says.

Greg looks at him. He moves his cigarette from one side of his mouth to the other. "I'd put it in the contract thing that I could," he says.

"Oh," Bob says. He licks his lips. "Then can I play me?"

"I'll think about it," Greg says. He hands his cigarette to Bob.

"Should we say something? Because it's Andrew?"

"You can say it to yourself."

Bob leans in cautiously to put the lit cigarette in Candice's mouth. Both Greg and Bob take a step back.

"So we just wait a minute, right?" Bob says. "Make sure it takes?"

"Sure," Greg says.

"You gonna kill everybody now?" Candice says. The cigarette flaps up and down from her lips. "Because I banged a lot of people you know."

Greg takes his revolver from his coat pocket. He trains it

on the back of Bob's head. He squeezes the trigger. The hammer rings against the empty chamber. He lowers the gun and examines the chamber just as Bob turns around.

"Let me see your gun," Greg says.

Bob hands Greg his nine millimeter. Bob turns back around to watch the gasoline-doused corpses on the couch. The cigarette burns slowly. Greg puts the nine millimeter to the back of Bob's head.

"It loaded?" Greg says.

"Yeah," Bob says.

Greg squeezes the trigger. It clicks empty. Greg sighs. He lowers the gun, not bothering to check the clip.

"Let's get out of here," Greg says.

"But this is my favorite part," Bob says.

"Mine was her smile."

"And marshmallows," Bob says. "If we had marshmallows."

Candice's lips catch. They walk around the couch. Greg points at the gas can. Bob picks it up. They leave the apartment. A shiny piece of garbage bag sticks to Bob's shoe like toilet paper. They close the door behind them, even though it doesn't latch.

"We should get marshmallows," Bob says.

"Bullets first," Greg says.

"They should make marshmallow guns."