

# **MENAGERIE**

**G. Wells Taylor**

Copyright 2008 by G. Wells Taylor

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written consent of the publisher, except where permitted by law.

ISBN: 978-1-4357-1393-2

Edited by Julia C. Moulton

WILDCLOWN MYSTERIES

Email: [books@wildclown.com](mailto:books@wildclown.com)

Website: [www.wildclown.com](http://www.wildclown.com)

Cover Design by G. Wells Taylor

## Chapter 35

“Are you kidding?” said the man with the magnum. His voice was baritone and not unpleasant. “If I was Felon, you’d be fucking dead already.” He weighed my gun with his hand before throwing the .44 into the gray grass behind the cabin.

“Do him Tiny!” the man with welding glasses cried. His voice held a slightly androgynous tone—enough lace to it to keep you wondering. “Fuck, you know he whacked Dogbone and Frenchy.”

“Far as I’m concerned, those bastards needed whacking,” the bearded man growled. He smiled at me. “I won’t hold that against you.” His smile widened. “But it won’t keep me from killing you when it’s time.”

Now I began to detect a slightly charred or incendiary smell coming from the man. And upon closer inspection, I saw that the hair on his head was frazzled and scorched.

“You were in the Chevelle,” I said, unsure how to play any of this. If we were lucky, Arthur would miss us and do something stupid. “In the City of Light.”

“Oh!” The man called Tiny smiled and gestured with his magnum. His voice sharpened with sarcasm. “Did you like that?” He gestured to the man with the beard. “Killer here got a bit premature with his rocket-propelled grenade.”

“Brother,” Killer said mournfully. “I already said sorry.”

“I don’t care. I wasn’t in the car,” Tiny laughed. “But you’ll be saying sorry to Driver forever. You fucked up his car.”

“Killer’s going to go out like Cody Jarrett,” the man with welding glasses giggled. “Top of the world Ma!” He laughed, “And then BAM! Killer goes and takes fifty cops with him.”

“Don’t encourage him,” Tiny drawled.

I poked my nose at the stranger in welding glasses. “You’re quite a driver.”

“Oh, I’m not Driver. No. No,” the man’s voice sang. He frowned with his stained lips. “I’m Cherry.”

I nodded, turned my head slightly to catch Vicky’s shape in my peripheral vision. “Where’s Driver. Is he here too?”

“He’ll be along shortly,” Tiny said this with a voice so calm and businesslike that I almost imagined us in a boardroom. “He and Bloody are bringing the boss up to meet you.” He chuckled, “They weren’t as lucky as me and Killer. We knew you were headed north, and it was a good guess you’d go as far north as possible.” He gestured to Killer. “We were checking out some other campgrounds when we crossed paths with Cherry.”

“And here we are,” Killer snarled, suddenly letting his eyes run over Vicky’s form. “Oh, fuck...” He took a step forward. His hands twitched in and out of muscular vices. “This might be fun after all.”

“Not yet,” Tiny hissed, his voice was calm and even and dangerous. “We get the spoils. That’s the deal. But only after Felon’s got what he’s looking for.”

“I wouldn’t mind an advance on the spoils right now,” Killer said, grinning, his voice filling with lust. He took another step toward Vicky. I started gauging my chances of crushing his windpipe before they gunned me down. Instead, I had a notion.

“You want spoils, you came to the right place,” I growled. Vicky’s breath hissed out in an angry stream as Killer smiled lasciviously. I shook my head. “Not that.” I had to throw the dice. “This Felon, your boss, he doesn’t hire guys with very bright ideas.”

“That’s Killer way,” Tiny laughed. “He’s a lady’s man.” Then his lower teeth appeared in a shark like smile. “*I’ve* got big ideas. I get them all the time.”

“I just wonder how much Felon would cut you in for,” I said, gesturing with an open hand like I was smoking. Tiny nodded, and steadied his gun as I pulled my cigarettes out. I gave one to Vicky, took one myself and lit them both.

“So what’s so big that needs me thinking about it?” Killer asked, coming close. He swung a glance back at Tiny. “Brother, is he scamming us?”

“We’ll see,” Tiny whispered, taking a step closer. I noticed he had the trigger pulled a third of the way back. “Let’s hear it.”

“It’s part of the reason this lady’s up here.” I blew a column of smoke at the chrome gun barrel. “She and her friends. They’re treasure hunters. And we were just heading out to find the Barnum and Bailey Horde.”

“He’s shitting us brother!” Killer stamped his foot and one hand clawed at his gun.

“Maybe,” Tiny said, making a ‘shushing’ motion with his hand and lips. “But I heard of this Barnum and Bailey thing once.”

I set my features, tried to look grim and convincing as I said, “I can take you to the midget who has it.”

“Midget?” Tiny’s tone was aggressive. He smiled, and then looked at his companions. “Hear this fucking clown, a midget, now!” They laughed.

“Besides your boss will be pissed off anyway.” I grinned. “The midget has the guy he’s looking for.”