

The Tale of Squid Vicious

They called him “Squid Vicious.” He left his mark, a chalk drawing of a squid, by every corpse in his wake. No one knew whether Squid was a man or a woman. Not until his arrest nearly two days ago.

The event annihilated social media, though it was surprisingly quiet in town. The calm before the storm. Soon, news crews from Los Angeles and New York would fly in to destroy the serenity that not even Squid Vicious sought to displace. It came somewhat as a surprise that the most infamous man in America was arrested by the Podunk police officers of the Fayetteville Police Department. Officer Johnathan Legend & Detective Sergeant Richard Martin.

Yup.

John Legend & Ricky Martin arrested Squid Vicious. You couldn't make this stuff up.

Alyssa browsed Reddit on her iPhone, eyeballing articles from esteemed writers with seemingly interesting notions on what makes Squid Vicious tick. She didn't buy any of it. Not even the preliminary account from an FBI profiler. Everybody wanted to assign motives to the man that had no firm basis in reality, far as she could tell.

The man behind the myth would be transported to national custody in the coming days and soon, the world hoped, some answers would be provided to their most burning questions. The most pertinent, for Alyssa, being: Did he tag the squid before or after the murders? Because if it's after, whatever, that's a graffiti artist hung up on being rejected from art school. If it's before, however, that means he's a man of cold, calculating intent with a fastidious mind & a laborious dedication to his studies.

Her bus came to a stop outside the restaurant where she worked. A cute little red-and-white checkered diner that stood at the street corner fifty years ago and, she expected, would stand at the same corner fifty years in the future. Nothing makes a person feel so tiny as being

part of a half-century old establishment wherein you can't name a single employee you didn't personally work with.

Upon entering, the television set that hung clumsily from the upper left corner of the restaurant droned on about the weather. Dry with a 90% chance of greater dryness in 100% of the dry areas. Perhaps a 5% chance of rain, but it'd be one helluva storm if that 5% were able to pull through.

"Alyssa!" her friend Ireland called from the kitchen.

She stored her bag & yoga mat in her cubby. Ireland was the only red-head in town and, true to her parent's wit, they made sure everybody would know.

"Alyssa, did you see the news?"

She had to rack her brain. Yes, of course she had, she'd been reading nothing but the news since the story first broke. Hell, she hadn't have slept if her will could overpower her body. For the life of her, however, she didn't know what Ireland could be talking about.

"He disappeared!"

He WHAT.

The look on Alyssa's face said everything words couldn't.

"Seriously! Catfish called me and told me to go home and lock the doors. Called Mom & Dad too! Just till the whole thing gets sorted out, he says.

Alyssa's face went flush. The idea fascinated her. In a town where everybody knew everybody, a mass murderer was hiding somewhere in the shadows. Like soap through fingers, he'd slipped the police.

"You think he's still in town?" Alyssa asked.

"I sure hope not!"

"Really?"

"You mean to tell me you hope he's still here?"

Alyssa stumbled over herself. She knew these feelings were weird. She'd want her friend to understand, but she couldn't count on Ireland to preserve her secret and keep her from becoming the town pariah.

"I mean, uh, we want our cops to be known as the ones who caught him, right? Not the town with the police who let him get away," she offered.

"Huh. I suppose you make a good point."

The bell dinged from the kitchen. *Order's up.* Alyssa tied an apron around her waist and the two girls went to work.

The day had finally come to a close. The girls tended to the needs of the last remaining customers, Hank, former military, a big guy who wouldn't leave his home without his Cowboy hat & Mike, an elderly man who spent much of everyday at the diner, his nose buried into his laptop.

"Girls," their boss said, "I've got to run out to my truck right quick."

"Do you want anyone to go with you?"

"No offense, but if Squid Vicious is gonna get me, I don't see what bringing either of you could do to change that. Besides, it's just to my truck and back."