**PR: Backdrop I**

**The Tale of Ricardo Gomez, Private, First Class**

It was night time. I was waiting for uncle “*Asado”*. I was sitting in the get-away Hovercraft. Not too long ago I was released from Juvi-side for auto-theft. I thought it was bad there. I thought I could become as bad ass as *Asado* used to be. We were at the Nicaraguan border. I was just a 15 year-old boy, what did I know back then? He had his hands on a shipment of M-134 that were just returning from the refurbishing factory. Who can ignore these six-barrel beauties, huh? This is probably due to their brute force and unmatched stopping power. I didn't know squat about our contraband then, but even I knew that this piece of machinery lived a millennium and a half past the first time it came off the production lines.

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Javier, *Asado* Andreas was the brother of my mother. He knew his way around trucks and Hover-pickups. There was nothing he couldn't fix. He was called “Asado” because of his mischief and erratic behaviour towards law enforcement entities or at least that's what I initially thought. Most likely because he had complete disregard for this establishment. He always told me how corrupt the system was. It was the root of all evil. He once shot thirteen cops in a single setting, his friends would brag. I saw him once get arrested for spitting in a cop's eye.

“*I grill two cops at night*

*I grill two cops in the afternoon and then I feel alright*

*I grill two cops in time of peace and two in time of war*

*I grill two cops before I grill two cops!*

*and then I grill two more.*”

*I grill two cops in the morning before I wake up,*

*and I grill two cops at noon.*

*I grill two cops before*

*I grill two cops and then I feed myself with a crooked spoon.*”

There was always a scent from him full of blood and gore, mixed with a stench of burnt gasoline and live tissues surrounded him. He told me he always liked grilled cops and I didn't take it literally. When the realization that his wild singing in his locked barbershop was accompanied with grilling and slicing of human meat, I had realized years later how fucked up he was. Of course it followed with nausea and headache as the hangover was really hard that time around, since for the first time I knew what I was trying to erase from my mind. Usually my hangovers followed by lousy dates or breakups, something which is a bit easier to digest than the stench of burnt human flesh.

*Asado* always worked with the big names of the local PMC. He told me to leave the little fish in the kiddies' pond, where they belong. I once asked him: “Uncle *Asado*,” what did these skunks ever do to you that you hate them so much?” He took off his shirt and showed me his back. It was full of scars from Hive Foundation Enforcer's lashes. Nothing leaves a scar like that except for the whips of Enforcers. Electro Static Shock Sticks, that could become telescopically extended and become whip- like in manner were the Enforcers' favourite means to humiliate civilians. They have used them - Excessively well. These Enforcers were ex-convicts, paying back their debt to society by ruthlessly enforcing the law. “Nothing much, Ricki, it's all in a day's work.” He put on the shirt and buttoned it back as casually as he could, but I think I did notice a bit of trembling in his fingertips.

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That night, I was waiting there in the Hover craft when *Asado* was waiting for the PMC's entourage to show up. He had his pickup truck with the goods near the ledge of a hanged bridge. “It's always a good idea to create a bottleneck when you're outnumbered.” He always played with the biggest fish in the lake. Little did he know that the police were also in the fish market that day, and they bought a fat lawyer, one who can succumb the local PMC in a wave of a magic wand. The entourage showed up just in time. Still I was nervous like every other hit I did with my uncle. Out of the cars some men in white tailored suits came out. No visible weapons as far as I could tell from my seat at the over watch. I ignited the stolen Hover car, and warmed the anti-gravity pellets.

A fat man who came to my uncle had a purple scarf around his neck. He was holding a gold tipped walking cane, encrusted with diamonds. He also had a heavy briefcase in his other hand, with what would seem to be a dangling human hand cut but still handcuffed to the handle. He said maybe two-three sentences to *Asado* and turned back. *Asado* put down his SRS shotgun, knelt down, and put his hands around his head. He spared a last glance at his pickup truck, where the goods were stowed under heavy fabric, though six barrels did show under the foil. *Asado* winked twice in my general direction. A second later, a group of Enforcers materialized from no where, disabling their thermo-optic camouflage suits in the ominous shadows and took him, but not before breaking by utilizing very well their Ex3S his jaw and knee-caps.

My engine froze off, and the flotation pellets shut down. I was trying to re-ignite the Hover-craft, I raised my head and saw a group of Enforcers who just turned off their TOC suits surrounding me and nodding their heads and charging up their Ex3S, hinting that I shouldn't bother re-igniting the engine. Held up under a knee cap of a few of the enforcers there who took turns of who is in a dire need to crush my wind pipe with their knee or elbow of the slightly warm but now getting colder hood of the hover-craft. I had come to the realization there is no escape from the law. I knew I'd be back at “Juvi-side” in no time. After nearly three more years I got out and I knew that I didn't want to be a criminal nor heaven forbid an Enforcer. I did however acquire a certain skill-set running guns with my uncle from Nicaragua to Angola, my homeland, which was just a pity to let it go to waste. That is how I decided to join the army, since I didn't think I would have been accepted nicely in the Hive.

To this day I have a feeling that somehow the bastard knew, or rather preferred to get busted that day. I have no idea how I knew it, but I just did. It might have been the trembling of his hands. That man never wavered before, so why begin now, all of a sudden. He was just 50 years old when it happened. No one starts wavering outside the Hive until, like, age 90 or so. Not with today's stem cells, and pico-technology, you know, esse? Something about the winking felt unnatural, like it was a code for honouring a certain agreement, as an unofficial pact.

It is clear to me now that he made a deal with the 'Nica' magistrate of the local PMC that if something ever happened to him I would be safe. Now I can call Juvi-side a safe middle grounds, compared to life working for either the PMCs or Enforcers. I suppose that military service was the only logical route that I could take that wouldn't involve living in the Hive next to families upon families of survivors of my uncle's atrocities. Blessed be thy soul, *Asado,* you crazy uncle. I will always pray for your soul's perdition, for none exist for your crimes.