
Gunners

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This is an original shorty story and has
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I was searching the bottom shelf of my frig when I heard the outer door open.

-Footsteps- I figured it was Tramaine and let my guard down. -Footsteps- I pulled out a fifth of Jim Beam and a tall solid black drinking glass from the shelf above.

-Footsteps- I was gettin' the ice out of the freezer when the footsteps of Tramaine stopped at the entrance of the apt.

"So what took you so long in coming-" was all I was able to say.

He was fast-and very light on his feet. The glass rolled off into a corner and the Jim Beam shot off the counter & underneath my bed, as I was slammed up against the farthest wall from my bed. Where my GLOCKS were holstered. Stress will make you that stupid!

He was pressing with both hands wrapped around the handle of a military carbon blade-pressing downward-trying to shove the damn thing down my collarbone. It was just instinct that put my hands up-crossing them under the blade, catching his wrist. He was strong, and weighed fifty pounds more than me. And he had two things to his advantage: he was heavier than I was, and the element of surprise.

No amateur here!

We struggled: I shifted as he pressed: I was working for a leverage position which he must have guessed 'cause he kept me off-balance by pressing down further on the knife. I remembered about the .38 on my ankle. But getting to that and keeping him from skewering me was a Houdini feat!

We locked eyes. He had calm, expressionless brown eyes. His face was intense,

but I had the feeling that his focus was on the pleasure of the carbon blade cutting into flesh. We'd slid down the wall, and the right leg with the .38 was bent enough to touch the back of my hip!

This turned out to be a good thing.

I could feel the tip slide a little into my chest. If I didn't move now, I would've been pegged to the floor by the sheer force and pressure he was applying.

It was quick.

I flexed my leg, launching both me and him awkwardly up, which made him lose his leverage for a split second but in that split second I was able to draw my .38.

The hammer was cocked, and three shots made a target pattern in the center of his chest. He fell back and into my counter. My right leg was almost strained and it took my mind off him for a second. A second was all he needed!

With the his last strength, cause I know he was on his way to taking a dirt nap, he lunged forward for one last strike, holding the blade at his mid-section so he would get me even if he dies falling forward!

I fell backwards, falling away from him, raising my .38, and emptying the remanding chambers into his chest. Then I caught myself from falling, shoved myself at his falling backwards body, slipping the blade out of his hand and made a deep smile across the carotid artery-letting him bleed-letting him return to his one-way trip to hell!

I held myself up with the counter, flexing my calf and leg muscles, letting the adrenaline dump take its toll. Like during combat in Croatia. We took heavy ordinance, pinned down by enemy fire. The blood gets oxygenated; the mind can go out of focus,

running on training. This was similar, but keeping my head in combat was something my father taught me to do. I pulled up a chair, slumping down, using my right hand to massage the right calf. A voice yelled from the office doorway,

"Murtaugh?" that was Riggs.

"In the apartment," I said, feeling tired.

"Oh, okay." *-Footsteps-* "Sorry to take so long. I got held up on another story. I got here next door just a-whoa-what the hell happened!?"

I looked up at him, head twisted. He jumped back, "Damn, man! The look on your face! Your eyes are blood red."

"Well, I wasn't exactly having tea and biscuits with this guy. Most likely this would've been one of the hitters that would've greeted you at some point if you'd done any research on what you found." My leg started to get some sensation back. "Stay there, I'm going to search him for information, some kind of I.D." I limp-walked over to the body. Now I could get a better look at him. He was built like a brick wall. Blocky, with broad shoulders and oatmeal like complexion. His jaw was slack, eyes rolled back into his head. He had black-short hair that was going gray at the temples. His nose was straight and he was lipless. I searched through the army-like fatigues, unzipping the inner pocket. A piece of yellow notepaper was folded up inside. I unfolded it.

"You're taking too long, Moses. I hope my gift gave you a little more motivation to get detecting," was all that was written.

"I'll send friends just to help you out!" echoed from the back of my mind again.

"So, let's see what you found, Tramaine."

He came up next to me, trying not to stare at the dead man with the slit throat.

"H-here you go, Moses. Uh, what are you goin' to do with the dead guy?"

"Here," handing him the number to the Bracken Arms. "Ask to speak to a Lazarus Gunn. Once you got him, tell him who you are and then say there's a clean up

job at your brother's place. Then hang up." Lazarus was good at disposal. After he was done, not even DNA would be left to find in the floor cracks.

I looked at the bill from the car rental place where Jerry Bell must have gotten his Escalades. He used that same name to rent eight black Escalades from Eduard Petrovi's Auto Emporium on the corner of Maple, off of Polar. I thought about doing a little recon before I went and picked up Lazarus. As I was thinking this, Tramaine was just finishing the tail end of the message I'd given him. He wandered to the door, standing at the apt. entrance. "I-I really don't like the look of this Moses. I'll catch up with you later. You can give me the lowdown after it's all over." He was about to turn around when he ran headlong into someone's chest, screaming like a young girl at a horror movie.

"Goddammit! Don't *hurt me!*"

"Where's the body at?" The Bracken Arms was about 10 blocks from here. Riggs wasn't off the phone for more than two minutes-most people would be surprised. I wasn't. I moved out of the way, showing Lazarus the corpse. He walked in, checked the body over, and went through his pockets, tilting his face left to right. He stood back up and snapped his fingers at Tramaine. "You, Tramaine, right? I need you to go to a hardware store. Get me a black plastic tarp, a hacksaw, a pair of pliers, an old truck battery, a pair of work gloves and a bib, a couple of gallon bottles of CLOROX bleach, some turpentine, two good sized rotating fans, filtered mask, and a Wu-tang clan CD. Anyone will die. Go!" Tramaine was gone soon after. Lazarus sat back down on his haunches, looking at the body. "If this is anything like what's coming Moses, I'm glad you called me. I like killing Bosnians. They are a tough breed of soldier."

"You could tell by his clothes and looking at him couldn't you?"

"Yup, heh, after this is done, where do we start?"

"At a Car rental place not too far away."

"Where's your stash?" I pointed towards the wall with my Rockwell picture on it.

He walked over, moving the picture to the left. The wall slid toward the window. The room behind was decked out with blades and weapons. His fingers stroked over each one. He spoke over his shoulder, "These will do just fine-just fine."

O_nE

We took the GTO. Willie, my Mechanic, said it would be a week before I could get my 3000GT back on the road after all the water it took in from Silver Lake. I loved this car, so I parked it in an alleyway across from Petrovi's. It was situated so I wouldn't have to worry about it getting any dents in case all hell broke. We sat there, watching the traffic roll by & people do the day-to-day things. It was 4:30 pm and the sun would set in a few hours. The waiting-I wasn't looking forward to. Waiting in a closed in space-with my brother. He stared off, head resting against the passenger window. He'd changed out of his cleaning gear into nothing but khaki's & black turtleneck with holsters for guns & knives. The fans he had Riggs buy were for drying the floor. You could most likely eat off it now. They would never find that assassin.

He spoke very casually for someone who wanted me dead.

"So what have you been up to, Moses? It's been awhile since mom's funeral and dad's birthday." Tens years since mom's passing, last year for dad's birthday. "I've heard about you through the vine. Heard you been making a name for yourself, a big man in his racket. Seeing as how that guy was there to ice you, I'd guess your enemies had gotten higher up on the food chain. This is a good thing. Means you won't go down

so easily."

I let out a long sigh, "Look, Lazarus. I've been trying to tell you for years now, it was a job. You know the-"

He cut me off, "I meant when nightfall comes, and we see what's in the files of this auto emporium. Hopefully, like you said on the way here, they'll have an address different then the place you said you'd already been to. This 'Jerry Bell' wants you to find him, so he may have left something for you there. The other thing, will handle itself eventually. Who knows, maybe you'll get lucky and you will walk away instead of me. The world's a funny place. Even the most impossible of things you'd never think of happening tend to happen."

I still wanted to plead my case. Not out of fear, mostly for my sake and my Dad. We were brothers for Christ's sake!

"But I-" he cut in again.

"Something's are fated to happen, Moses! That's just the way it is. Now let it rest, you're boring me."

Aggravated, I let it drop. No use getting riled about it, then go into a situation that may become potentially hot. "You want a sandwich, Laz? There's a brown bag in the back with cold-cut heroes, some cokes, some yellow mustard, mayo and gherkins." We'd be there for a while and there was no need to go in on an empty stomach.

He reached behind the seat, pulling out the bag, placing it on his lap. He opened the bag, pulling out one of the two heroes. "Good lookin' out brother. Here, take one. Hopefully we'll need the energy. I hate waiting."

Two

There were five rows of used autos lined up in the front of the long showroom that had high windows, displaying the autos inside. We hunch-ran by cars, keeping close to the ground and out of the moonlight. Camera evasion was a must because the place had moving mini-cams on the north corner and the southern corner of the buildings. The back of the lot had cars in row formation also. The rear door to the manager's office was simple to pick due to the fact that it was also wired. Lazarus was behind me. His body language was relaxed, but I could tell he was coiled inside, wanting and waiting for something to jump off. His pent-up energy needed a place to go and since he couldn't gut me at this moment, all he could do was tense up and stroke the handles of his blades. There was a laser motion sensor a few inches from the door which meant if the door was opened further, the alarm system would go off and we'd be screwed! I unzipped my poach, looking for a reflective surface to bounce the laser, keeping it from breaking the circuit. What was buried inside was a Bowen wide switchblade that I'd picked up a few years back. The blade itself was always able to keep a high shine which made it ideal when fighting close quarters in a place with a lot of light. I've blinded a few enemies with it. They never came back to bother me again.

I quickly shoved the blade into the linoleum floor hard! It had to be quick and straight. If I was any slower the circuit would have been broken and-there you go.

The office had a steel table and a Dell computer flat screen 19' inch with drive on top of it. I went and looked around the other connecting offices, searching the individual filing cabinets until I found the file cabinet for the dates that was on the rental slip. I pulled out my mini-flash that I held in my mouth and flipped through the folders until I came to 'Jerry Bell'. I held the flash with my right hand, the folder in the left. The

address said that 'Jerry Bell' was residing in a summer rental outside the city. 1642N. I put the flash down, light off, and pulled out my navigator palm pilot that had internet access. I Googled the address for some info. The rental was someone's bright idea of building an authentic Spanish bungalow-type fort slash house with a full court yard and underground rooms. It even had guard towers. Jerry was throwing the cash around, but he had a cardiac over the bullet holes his men left in the first place he rented.

The hell kinda fool am I dealing with? I was ready to bury the sonofabitch permanently and call this game over. Send Lazarus back to his Aryan hunting, and bring Mr. Richardson the head of this bastard on a spike and have my rep fixed! I wanted my revenge, and not just for me, for a good man, and a son that didn't ask to be made a target by greed that had no idea of the worth of a man's son.

I was reading further down when Lazarus's silent cursing stabbed through the silence that my thoughts had given me. "Dammit, dammit, dammit, dammit, dammit, dammit!"

"What?" I said in a whisper.

"I should never have come here so damn ready. I'm not loose, I'm not relaxed. You do this, you throw off my game. Now see what happened!" Lazarus was moving around, looking over the desks, looking out the windows, sniffing the air around us.

I put my palm pilot away along with the flash and the address saved in it.

"What the hell's wrong with you?"

He had his hands on the Mac-tens he had holstered under each arm.

"Remember that scene in 'Commando'?!"

'You think I could smell them coming?'

Oh shi-and the place was suddenly shattered into a hail of glass and gunfire!

I dove for cover underneath the desk with the Dell on it, hearing the computer getting smacked to pieces by M-60 full auto rounds that were unmistakable in their

sound. Full auto was definitely not obtained legally! Lazarus was cold as ice now. His desire to murder me was replaced with the adrenaline rush of combat he was looking for.

"This is what I want!" he said while ducking next to a nearby water cooler. The calendar behind it was torn to shreds. He was quick as ever. He stuck both Mac-ten's in crucifixion style and let loose both clips in opposite directions, trying to give me a suppressive fire for me to position myself in the front. I made a dash for the front, firing off both MP5's as I slid up against a blue Buick that was making itself handy for a shield.

Flood lights lit the showroom up like someone let off a flash grenade. Lazarus was busy firing at the group that must be in the back lot, leaving the front to me.

Getting out of there was going to be nothing short of a fu-then the bullets stopped-silence-chipped glass fell like dripping water. Lazarus's feet crunched glass as he was trying to position himself. The high-pitched squeal of a mega-phone being turned on broke the silence.

The voice was all too familiar!

"Moses? Hello. I'm glad to see you this far." He had an accent that was starting to cause me to remember something! "It would have been very disappointing if my little gift would have taken away my fun. You would have turned out to be less than a worthy adversary for me and I would have hated! to have wasted all my planning and energy on someone whom I have come to want dead as badly as you! Who's that with you? Ah, I see some family resemblance. A cousin or brother perhaps? How nice." Goddammit this guy likes to hear the sound of his own voice. I wanted to know what the hell this was about to have such an army thrown against me. What kind of money does this jerk-off have behind him? "What the hell is this about, 'Jerry'? C'mon, between us girls, dish the dirt, hmm? You've been leading me around by the nose, try just playing straight with me." Lazarus was dropping & switching clips. 'Jerry's laughter was pissing me off! But

I took that moment to pull out my palm pilot, accessing my email. I tapped on the screen two addresses, and hit the 'NEW MAIL' option. The first went into the 'To:' area, while the second was put in the 'Bcc:' area. Keeping their emails private from them both just in case they wanted their individual privacy. I sent a quick message out to them both. This 'Jerry Bell's' got the cash fund for a goddamn army! Two more of us here would be nice. If we survive.

Jerry's voice started to get higher, more cock-sure. I was starting to get too familiar with this idiot's mentality. "I suggest someone in there check by the water cooler in the corner. Left a little parting gift. As before, if you prove resourceful enough, I'll see you at the end of my little hrabar!" -*KRISH*, was the noise of his mega-phone turning off. I stood slightly and the bullets began to fly. Lazarus was looking around-ducking behind another desk-then, "Moses!" his voice shot from behind the desk nearest the water cooler. "I got C-4 and a timer countdown for 58 seconds!" I dodge-ran between the wagons, SUVs and sports cars, Lazarus did the same until we met in the middle. Lazarus wasn't scared, just nervous, "I set my watch by that timer. We got 42 seconds." I looked around. Think dammit! Think. There was a pair of black and red 2005 Dodge Magnums parked near the front. "Head for the Magnums, pop the trunk and get your ass inside!" He nodded. He counted off, then started with the suppressive fire-39-I ran and made it to the black Magnum-25-Lazarus made it to the Red Magnum-15-Shot the lock off, missing the trunk latch, kicking the backseat down and sliding in belly-flat-5-Lazarus did the same-1-0!

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....."Moses?" A voice called from someplace deep beneath the ocean. The hood was crushed flat. A banging noise, then a thud. Another banging, then a wrenching sound. The trunk door came off with a 'crunk' and dropped to the street. Lazarus pulled me out of the wreckage of the Magnum that was slammed against the brown stoned insurance company across the street from the auto emporium.

The place was one big Roman candle!

"Moses!" I was a little deaf from the explosion. I think Lazarus yelled my name twice before now.

"Y-yeah, Lazarus?"

"You okay to stand?"

"Yeah, let me up." I stood, resting my hands on my knees. I had scratches and the feeling of a bruise around my ribcage. Blood trickled down from my mouth. I sucked it back in. "Moses," Lazarus was facing the blaze across the street. "Fire trucks are coming and the cops won't be far behind. I like these odds, but for your sake, I hope you got some peoples coming. 'Cause this is a small scale war!-and the ante just got raised."

"I've got some people on the way," I said, wiping the wet blood off my chin.

I'd just noticed where Moses' Magnum was-it was twisted into a pretzel and cracked in two, buried into the building next to this one. He didn't have a mark on him.

We ran back to where my GTO was parked. Lazarus drove; I sat in the passenger side. Our gear was stowed in the back. My blade was back there. I looked at him. He was focused on driving, "A good blade is like a friend. You always keep it close-and never lose it."

Some people would be surprised at my brother's skill. I wasn't. 'Cause someday-I was going to have to go up against him.

DaNtA & JeSuS

A white flash. A burning cinder of smoke. The wrenching of metal. The melting of plastic. Fiberglass twists and my body is lifted from the ground. A dragon belches & my mind goes blank.

The world became daylight. White, & empty.

"Moses?" A voice said insistently. "Moses, we got company." I awoke in my house, on my couch, staring at my hard wood roof. "Moses!" I pulled myself up off the couch; the tightness of medical tape was around my ribcage. Lazarus was next to the window of my front door, doing his best imitation of Malcolm X at his window, except Lazarus was holding my GLOCK. I heard a tired, strained voice ask him, "Describe them." That voice was mine. "Two men. One looks of Latin descent. Slight build, slicked back hair. Well dressed. The other is Asian, possible American born from his manor. Dressed in blue jeans and a brown bomber flight jacket. Full body tat from the marking around his neck above the t-shirt collar."

I smiled, lying down on my soft couch pillows, "Let them in Laz. Them's the help I called. By the way, how long have I been out?"

Lazarus relaxed, unlocking the front door, returning my GLOCK to its holster. He said, "You've been out for two days. You had some bruised ribs, a slight concussion-" I felt my lip, "And a swollen lip to match, eh?"

"Yeah," he was still at the door as the knock came. "Who is it!" He screamed through the solid oak door. Old habit we both had from growing up.

"We got Moses' message. We came ASAP like a Mutha, cousin." That was Dante.

He was a smooth Vato from East LA who was apart of my crew in my Merc days. Jesus was also apart of my crew. He was a Japanese-born American.

Dante: "What's the situation Moses?"

"I got an unknown enemy with a lot of artillery, expendable men, and the *chedda* to keep the wave coming. You two down for it?"

Dante was scratching his goatee. Lazarus was eyeballing Jesus. For some reason Lazarus had problems with Japanese-Americans. I could never figure it. Jesus was eyeballing him right back.

"Youse my people, Moses. We go to hell; we go together. Right Jesus?"

Jesus and Lazarus were circling each other.

This may get *ugly!*

--to be continued--