

5 Mictlāntēcutli

Central America

Dominíc Luís de Mictlāntēcutli Santísimo Fernandez grew up in El Salvador. Dominíc is one interesting son of a bitch. Love him or hate him (I happen to love *and* hate the wonderful mother-fucker), he is undeniably an extremely charismatic individual. And it really is a love/hate relationship that he, probably unknowingly and certainly unwittingly, cultivates with his acquaintances. Dominíc, or Bird, as we've always called him, was raised in San Salvador, El Salvador — the nation's capitol. That's the easy way to describe his "hometown". Now, "raised" is a bit of a stretch — the little fucker was tossed and left to fend for himself, which he did quite well. And the story, *his* story, is pretty damn interesting.

[The Present Writer COLLECTIVE was graced in the recent past with his story, a history that will bend the future of all of those within the sphere of influence of certain key characters in this wild world that I will now unweave. Bestowed upon your favourite (and endearing) present writer was a gracious presentation of the the less than humble, pernicious beginnings of an entertaining journey into specifics regarding this history that will directly reverse the disastrous direction of flow of current in our wretched, inauspicious beginning in the very near future.]

It was a wild night, about 18 months ago, when we were all still fresh acquaintances. A small group of us had gathered together one evening at "the Krib" to just hang out, relax, party a bit, and get to know each other. "The Krib" is the cozy little cottage house half-way up the hill on Laurel Canyon Blvd. belonging to Dominíc, where he lives with his mistress, Katiana. Bird and Katiana have a relationship that I can't quite put a finger on. They are not actually married, and I guess that's why he refers to her as his mistress. Yet, they are really in sync with each other, and I can't imagine them not together in the "Really Life".

Miss Katiana (that's what Bird calls her) comes from a working class family living in Buenos Aires. She emigrated to Los Angeles as a teen ager and hasn't seen her family since leaving Argentina maybe a dozen years ago. Her roots in extreme poverty taught her respect for the simple things in life — food, shelter... hope. Dominíc introduced her to a different existence as the world of her humble heritage collided with his dangerously extravagant new world.

So, that wild night at "the Krib" started off fairly formal and moderate. Our "small group" consisted of Dominíc (Bird), Miss Katiana, Tato (el Vato), and myself. Alexander!! Damnit, have I not mentioned my full Christian name yet? Yeah, but, again here it is: Ethan Alexander Portfidio. Our normally formal decorum quickly devolved and was immoderated with the helping hand of an army of fingers that chopped and mirrored up an imposing pile of contraband and we settled into a fiesta of story-telling, with Bird soon reveling in revealing some very interesting insights into the wild jungle that was his childhood. His family had long and deep ancestral roots in the Antiguo Cuscatlán Municipality of the La Libertad Department of El Salvador. All of this is

SERENA CHAPTER 5 - MICLÀNTĒCUTLÍ

one small section at the western edge of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (Área Metropolitana de San Salvador or AMSS). The country is known for its agriculture, foods, cultural history, and its abundance of volcanos.

El Salvador's lush, arable land owes its richness to the geothermal activity deep below the surface. Central America is sandwiched in between three major tectonic plates. The North American, Caribbean, and Coco plates are constantly colliding, generating the perpetual volcanic activity. The region's rumbling magma chambers belch forth an endless supply of new and nutrient-rich earth to fertilize the verdant landscape giving agriculture its perfect cradle.

Consequently, we have a hotbed of thriving agriculture, and the coffee plant is among the variety of vegetation that grows heartily throughout the area. With the mass consumption and popularity of coffee on a global scale, the coffee bean has grown into a valuable commodity and, naturally, a primary export from El Salvador.

Dominic's family has been invested in this coffee industry for generations. Traditions born out of centuries-long labour and refining have evolved little over time — until recently. The past half-century has seen a spectacular evolution in almost every aspect of life. Technology begat the computer and the resultant mass efficiency of trade, travel and the principle contributor to the explosion of the global entrepreneur: the *virtual* transaction!

"Look at that poster," Bird pointed to the frame on the wall. "You see that? Mira a los chicos. What do you notice about those Pepe's?"

"I'm sorry?" I had to inquire.

"What are dees vatos doing?"

"Who's Pepe?"

"Vatos, ese!"

"Va— oh, yeah, yeah, right. They are..." I searched for clarity in the picture on the poster. There were two guys standing at the urinal at some indoor facility with their backs to us. The guy on the left was dressed in traditional Aztec clothing; the guy on his right suited in modern professional attire. They were both arcing a stream, presumably, and simply staring glazedly at the wall in front of them. It hit me: *plus ca change, plus ca la meme chose!*

"Ese, theenk Pepe," Bird encouraged.

"Who the fuck is Pepe?!" I clamored.

"Pepees are fuckeen vatos, muchacho!" Tato el Vato barked emphatically.

"You see, ese..." Bird continued, "... — thees two guys are worlds apart in what they come from. They got nada in tha commonality of one to the other. But, you see, ese? They both still piss the same way. He's from another planet, but he still holds it the same as forever."

"Yes, the more that things change, the more they stay the same," i resounded.

SERENA CHAPTER 5 - MICLÀNTĒCUTLÍ

Bird is a hard core el barrio style latino from El Salvador, as is Tato, his shadow. The two are a true duo — a package deal — an inseparable ensemble. Dominic is the intellectual half of the team. He orchestrates all of the deals and connections that the two take part in. Dominic knows which doors to knock down, and Tato knows *how* to knock them down. Tato is soft spoken, but Tato is indeed mean. No — *savage* better depicts the rampant creature. Tato never really says much — just quietly plays his role. His is a role of eradication — of elimination — of resolution — of murder.

This time was unintentional and we had ended up with a female hostage. El Vato Tato and Miss Katiana are watching the girl right now. We had to decide what to do with her. We couldn't just hold her indefinitely. We had to resolve the situation. But to just exterminate her? That's not what *the Program* was about. This was our first dilemma.

We also had to deal with the situation regarding Tato's aggressive behavior and penchant for unbridled violence. But Tato and Bird were pretty tight together. They went way back. I would need to be careful in dealing with the situation so as not to stir animosity within our group — so as not to alienate myself. One must be very careful when working with murderers. If you lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas, and Tato was definitely a dog.

[*The Present Writer lives in that interstitial space: "I am the space between all material objects."*]

[*The deaths of Paulina and Amber had torn a deep hole in Ethan's psyche and set him on a twisted adventure of self-destruction and soul searching. Somewhere along the sinking line Ethan lost direction. That point happened to be with Bird and Tato.]*