

## 6 The Debacle

Friday, July 4, 2003

Here we are replaying the same sadistic scene that we walked through in smaller scale just a few months ago — well, 10 months to be exact. Last night, Friday, the 4th of July, we headed over the hill and into the Valley to pay this guy, Dan, a visit. I hate the fucking Valley. *The Accident that ended my wife and daughter's lives took place on the 405 going over the hill and into the Valley. The unfortunate bastard flipped his van over the median and into oncoming freeway traffic — into my Paulina and our Amber, ending their lives instantly with the impact, then scorching them in the ensuing fire.* Images of these thoughts continually plague my mind — during the day, as well as in my horrific nightmares.

Last night, we took that same horrific route into the Valley to collect up on a debt. The amount of the debt was a healthy \$60k, and furthermore, principle was at stake. I had met Dan several times, and, admittedly, he was indeed the smooth-talking, conniving, sticky-fingered thief type. He was always joking around, laughing about some new hapless dude on whom he was pulling some scam. We had given an inch, and Dan was trying to snatch a mile.

When we got to the house, we were greeted by the ever-so-slightly pudgy, yet charming, Christy, Dan's current companion, lover, or whatever the fuck she was. As the door opened, I saw this beautiful face, a pleasant surprise. But as our image reached her retina, and realization befell her, she became silently alarmed. Dan stepped up just then, and cordially invited us in.

"Dominic! And Ethan, right?!"

"Hello, hello," I returned as Dan swept us inside and quickly glanced around out front.

"Get your asses in here."

"Hi, how are you? My name is Ethan," I offered to the girl.

She hesitated. "Introduce yourself," Dan barked.

"Hi. I'm... Cris — Christy." She was clearly concerned about our presence. She obviously knew something about Dan's involvement with, and debt to, us.

"Very nice to meet you, Cris Christy." We were all caught in a strange type of suspended half-laughter for just a moment.

"What brings you by today?" Dan dug.

"We just wanted to pay you a little visit; say hello; discuss a little business with an associate who we haven't seen in some time," Bird told him with feigned endearment and palatable disdain.

"Where have you been?" Dan attempted to turn the tables. "Come with me." We followed Dan into his den area — more like a testosterone zone, actually. The wall with the fireplace was the only aesthetically redeeming feature of what was essentially a smelly sweat factory and fitness fortress. Two other walls were lined with various exercise machines and racks of free weights. These two opposing walls were also completely lined with mirrors, which created a nice effect. This was Dan's turf. He was comfortable here. He knew friction was in the air and trouble was a mere whisper away. The cordiality of his demeanor was not a small black lie.

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The defiant “Where have you been” response from Dan clearly only refined Bird’s resolve. With it, Bird’s facial features tightened slightly, his eyes narrowing, fixing Dan’s every movement from their frozen perch in Bird’s cool and steady head. “Funny you mention it. Actually, I’ve been looking for **you** for some time now.”

The back wall was all windows — large, vertically-situated, rectangular viewing windows, with semi-circular arched tops. In one corner a lone and awkward wet bar was set up, and this was where Dan was fiddling about. “I’ve been around. Hey, I’m here. Let me get you guys a drink. Whadya have? What’s your mother’s milk... your nectar of the gods?” Danny boy was babbling nervously.

“Tequila.” Bird’s answer through me off. I was craving clarity of mind.

With a raised eyebrow, Dan waved a hand across the agave selection.

“Añejo,” Bird instructed.

“And Ethan, what would you like?”

“Scotch, rocks.” My own answer surprised me as well. Liquid courage – hell, powder invincibility. As this was running through my mind, I noticed an automatic rifle resting in the corner near the bar. I consciously kept a distance between myself and Bird, to spread out the targets should Dan decide to let loose.

As Dan was clanking ice cubes into our glasses, Bird pushed forward. “Dan, as you know, we still have a heavy outstanding balance extended to you, and I have tried to contact you for some time.”

Dan went about the drink tending, without a response.

“I’n telling you how eemportant it eez for you to address dees pro’lem. I don’t know what else to do, amigo. We desperately need to resolve dees matter,” Bird capitulated.

“Scotch up.” Dan set the scotch and rocks on the edge of the bar, without making eye contact with either of us, then motioned to Bird on the Añejo. In what was like one fluid motion he looked at Bird, peered into the kitchen through the arches looking for Christy, then produced, from behind the bar, a serious handgun and pointed it out through one of the glass windows. The house was situated on the lower sloping foothills of Studio City, so we beheld a somewhat extensive view of this part of the fucking Valley. It appeared Dan was aiming at nothing in particular.

“Desert Eagle Mark VII .44 Magnum. Only 10 rounds in the clip, but she’s powerful enough with just one. Check her out.” With that, he set it on the bar next to the scotch, and reached for the Skyy.

“Now, for a fat driver.” I watched him slowly pour a glass of Skyy, and then add a touch of token OJ for garnish.

The moment seemed frozen in time. The pretense was absurd. Bird enjoyed a pull off his tequila. The moment was beyond real. Then Dan reached back for the automatic rifle, pulled it out, and raised it up, releasing the magazine clip. He looked it over, examining it, and we looked him over, sizing him. Bird set his Añejo back down on the bar.

“This is Pandora. It’s a Heckler and Koch HK91 .308 caliber. She’s tight as fire. I got a deal about to shine through on three full crates of Pandoras.”

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Dan seemed to be cool, but then after a few moments of sanity, he wiggled on a tricky slick dime. It's like something tripped a wire in his brain — the fucking Valley. I hate the fucking Valley. Anyway, I wasn't prepared for what developed next. Flaming ice. Dan was ice, then Dan was fire. Day and Night. Dan was day, then Dan was night.

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

**Evil and good, black and white**

**Death and life, day and night-----**

The scene went from a tentative calm to a blistering chaos. Dan had been playing around, toying with the guns he had lying around. We knew he was full of shit, but we didn't (I didn't) expect him to become irrational like *that*. Dan was a fairly big guy with cropped hair. Looked kinda like a gym freak, and now carried the attitude to match. Despite his air of self-importance, he seemed generally non-threatening. Then he swung the barrel over at us — and marched out from behind the bar, with his newfound and brazen fearlessness — and began to bark frenetic commands. And complain — about random and unrelated things. His timid girlfriend, standing in the archway to the kitchen, was now quite visibly distressed. Dan's demeanor had deteriorated from bleak to dismal, and, prancing around like an iron butterfly on a cocktail of steroids and mushroom tea, Dan ranted on. Bird never said another word — not one. When casual fun suddenly becomes murder, events take on an absolutely surreal flavor. This evening was no exception.

Dan was very dead.

Bird delivered one slender round directly through Dan's neck, immediately silencing the annoying bastard, except for a short, and final, series of gurgly, gasping noises. Dan went straight to his knees, impaling [Dominic Luís de Mictlāntēcutli Santísimo Fernandez](#) with an evil stare, until, as if to answer the beckoning eyeball, Bird's 9mm spit leaden death right into Dan's orbital socket.

Christy, Dan's chicky, was paralyzed with fear and white as a ghost. She had been trying to mask her nervousness by staying busy cleaning up in the kitchen, but, clearly, she knew we were dangerous. By the time Dan had become unmanageable, Christy was watching from across the living room in the doorway to the breakfast room. At the first shot, she jumped, or rather twitched with a violent flinch, and let out a quick cry as she involuntarily gasped. Her eyes were stretched open so wide, as if she were staring directly into the unwavering eyes of death. I guess she was. She couldn't peel her eyes away from the scene, until after the next shot obliterated her boyfriend's eye and the brain parked right behind it. Then she darted her eyes towards the door, and then right back at Bird. She couldn't move. Bird walked over to her, and escorted her to the couch, where he sat her down, keeping her silent with a methodical, telling finger to his lips.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you," were Bird's first words. "Just be a good lee'tle girl."

She was sitting up with her hands in her lap, kind of crying, mostly just paralyzed. Her throbbing nipples jutted out through her cashmere sweater, huge with dread and anticipation. She was ours. Bird calmly held her hand, delivered a simple glance in my direction, and proceeded to tie her up thoroughly, gag her gently, and blindfold her. Yes, she was definitely ours.

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What ensued was a task quite easily performed. It was a pleasure slicing life from this now silent pile of death. This guy was physically in good form, so I knew that getting him open and finding everything would be a breeze. While I was methodically preparing the organs for transport, Bird got the ice chest and other medical supplies out of the vehicle and ready. I pulled the heart, kidneys, pancreas, and lungs and placed them neatly on the sterile surgical gown I had packed.

The useful organs were placed in individual Paragonix Sherpa Pak™ plastic medical pouches. Each organ needed three plastic bags. The first plastic bag contains the organ itself in a preservation solution such as Celsior. This bag is placed in a second bag which is in turn placed in the third. Both filled with saline and then put in the ice box. The ideal temperature for organ preservation is 5°C. Any warmer, hypoxia [metabolism is not decreased sufficiently]; and any lower than 4°C will damage the organ through protein denaturation. Cryophase PCM Gel packs (Phase Change Material) baggies [compliments of Cedar-Sinai] and dry-ice ensured a consistent transport temperature of 4°C - 8°C. Normally, the cold chain process involves certifying the elements [organs] at each stage during transport; right now we simply needed to race the clock — we were on an absolute time budget. An adequately iced kidney can be kept viable for about 24 hours; hearts and lungs for fewer than **six hours** after removal.

Next, the fun part: the systematic destruction of the corpse. We needed to obscure the connection between the deaths and the sudden appearance of organs at the local hospital. So I severed the head, crushed the skull with the dirty meat mallet, and we spread the brain matter around with the rest of the remaining internal organs. Dominic cringed during corpse detail so I took over the most egregious of the wet-work.

“Hurry the fuck up, Ese!” Bird bellowed.

“What’s the matter, you big pussy.”

“Ou-ouch! Pinché puta!”

“The hell did you do?” I laughed at his cringing, careless ass.

“Pinché cabeza! Stabbed my fucking palm with fucking skull shards! Damn. They sharp,” Dominic edified the moment with a spattering of levity.

“Wash that RIGHT NOW,” I beseeched. “I’m serious.”

We minced and chopped and sliced and diced Dan’s remains and spread him and his blood all around the kitchen. The bulk of the remaining entrails were placed in a trail towards the kitchen sink and garbage disposal, indicating that some portions (i.e. the missing organs) could feasibly have been lost down the drain. This would help explain to the authorities why the body was incomplete. By tearing up photos and breaking keepsakes, we conditioned the environment to appear to have been the scene of a domestic dispute gone incredibly and insanely too far.

Artisans at play, we created a veritable Pollock-inspired abstract, establishing an avant-garde category we like to call “*dis*-organized impressionistic action art”. A single *pièce de résistance* of the artistic nature of nature itself. Gangsters paint houses, we paint kitchens.