

Give Blood and Thanks

By: Daniel Machal

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Chapter 12: Come together, right now! Over me - Love, Smitty.

Since he had parted ways with the microwave Remy wasn't able to sleep very much. At some ungodly hour he found himself rummaging through the dumpster at the cafe across from Smitty's shop. He popped up for air just in time to see the whole street light up in a flash of bright white light.

Arthur Martian was pulling out of the cafe when he saw the flash. He slammed the Eldorado's brakes and jumped out of the car.

The girl in the cafe was in the bathroom taking a piss so she didn't see it, but she heard the old brakes. Not uncommon at this time of night. Half the city was drowning their sorrows in booze or drugs and then driving home to families they hate. Bound to be a few near miss accidents.

The cook at the cafe, he saw it, but his green card was about to expire and he was fresh out of county jail for a DUI and driving on a suspended. So he tried his best to ignore the flash.

A dog tied up outside saw it too, but he just figured it was one more step toward canine dominance over the planet so, he didn't do anything. One less human to be disposed of, as far as he was

concerned.

The old lady who never leaves the cafe saw it. Her large hat tipped up from the aging 1993 Edition of Cat Fancy at just the right moment to catch the flash through her greying cataract eyes. She wasn't quite sure what happened but she liked any excuse to call the cops. She was the one that phoned in the disturbance of the peace. Arthur was already out of his car when the dispatcher asked what units were in the area.

Remy shuffled across the street to take a look. Some guy in a tan trench coat was already there and kicking in the door.

Arthur felt the pain shoot up his leg when the glass door didn't give. He let out a roar as the joint in his knee compressed and the cartilage snapped. He surprisingly kept his balance and teetered on the good leg. The fat man was on the floor inside laying next to a shotgun. He wasn't moving, maybe not even breathing. Arthur put two rounds through the heavy duty lock and one through the glass. Instantly the burglar alarm went off screeching in his ears. Crystals rained on the carpet as he made a hole with the butt of his gun to reach the handle inside. He pushed the door open with his shoulder and collapsed into the shop.

As he lay there on his back he pointed his gun in all directions prepared to unload on the first thing that looked remotely threatening. The cheap alarm system shorted out within seconds and it became quiet.

"You okay buddy?" Remy appeared outside the door. Arthur whipped around on his back. The shattered glass under him made tiny stinging cuts into his thighs.

"Get on the ground," Arthur commanded.

"Easy there friend," Remy held out a his hands. "You hurt?"

Arthur relaxed his grip on the .38 and lowered the barrel.

"Leg is fucked up. Butterball here is worse off."

Remy shuffled over putting his good leg toward Arthur.

"Can ya' stand?" Remy asked.

"Yea, I think so. Here help me, on three," Arthur said. Remy crouched as much as his leg would allow and put his arms under Arthur's arm pits.

"1...2...3," Remy hoisted Arthur up to his legs. Arthur was surprised at the smaller man's strength. This wasn't the first time he had hoisted almost dead weight. Arthur extended his legs and took his weight off Remy's grip.

"Fuck!" his leg gave out and he fell back on to the glass. Little daggers dug into his ass now, and blood started to seep out of the small lacerations. The adrenaline was wearing off and the pain began to take over.

"You better just sit there for now," Remy said as he looked over at the heap of Smitty.

"Smitty dead?" Remy asked.

"Smitty? You know this guy?" Arthur winced. Was bad enough he shot a cat, now his damn ass was going to need glass picked out of it. He felt the pre-embarrassment of the coming days.

"Yea, he owns the place." Remy went over to the body to see if Smitty was still alive. He picked up one of Smitty's meaty paws and felt for a pulse. It was weak but he would make it.

"Jesus, his face," Arthur nodded toward Smitty. Remy looked at the black indented circles that used to be Smitty's eyes.

"Looks like he took a flaming arrow to each one," Remy said.

"Poor bastard," they both said at the same time.

The black and whites arrived bathing the store front in flashes of blue and red. Remy didn't like dealing with cops but he knew it would be alright. He'd get the normal drill of questions: Who the hell are you and where were you when it went down?

Now that Arthur knew that Remy knew Smitty, he was sure to be a suspect. At least if they held him for questioning he would get a cot to sleep in and a hot meal or two, then he would be released. Being homeless doesn't make you a criminal, but it always makes you the prime target for the blame.

"Art!" John dashed to his brother's side. He looked at Remy.

"You, outside, now," John said with expected accusing eyes.

"Easy on him John he just wandered by and offered to help. Isn't that right...?"

"Remy," Remy said.

He nodded and made his way to the curb as paramedics rushed past him to tend to Arthur and Smitty. Gazing through the bars on the windows he watched the frantic activity inside. Remy caught a glint of something shiny. Among the organized chaos of the Trauma Unit, behind the bobbing heads, and among the fury of blue latex gloves, the familiar microwave sat on the floor. The door was open. Inside Remy could see the fluffy white of potato mountain, and the small specs of neatly stacked peas.

"No, way," he said aloud.

"No way what?" the young officer said.

Remy turned and found himself eye to eye with a boy. Just a boy. This kid was all too familiar to Remy. He watched many of these King Kong dicked gunslingers die because they thought they were invincible. Itchy trigger fingers and underestimations of the enemy found many a mother getting a hand delivered letter and a pine box filled with what was left of their child.

'Oh, sorry ma'am. The letter says your son died a hero, that

must be true. They would never tell you it was because he wanted to earn Daddy's respect and get a medal. That is why he charged into that hut, guns blazing, only to have his throat cut by some Charlie waiting in the rafters above the threshold. No, he served his country well, and did exactly what he was told to do. 'Go son, go and make us proud,' Daddy said. Now mamma is crying wondering what happened to her baby boy, and daddy is crying out to God to bring his son back. While Satan sits in the parlor enjoying a highball of fine whiskey from the liquor cabinet carving, "you get what you wish for" into the fresh mahogany bar that Daddy and Son built and stained the summer before he shipped out to basic; they both sit here and wonder, why him? Why us? War is hell folks, deal with it.'

Fingers snapped in front of Remy's glossed over face.

"Back to reality pal. I got some questions." Remy sighed holding back the tears.