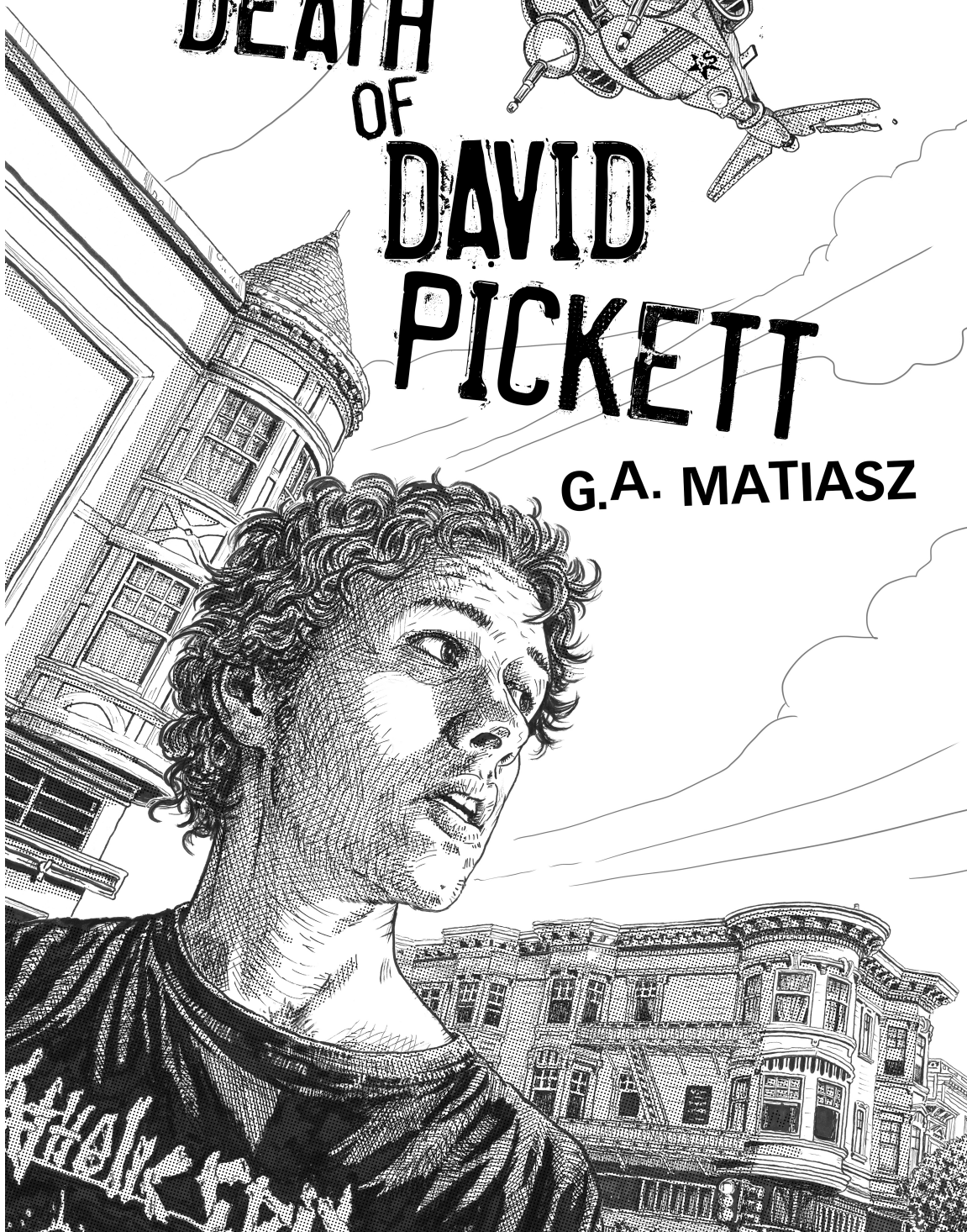
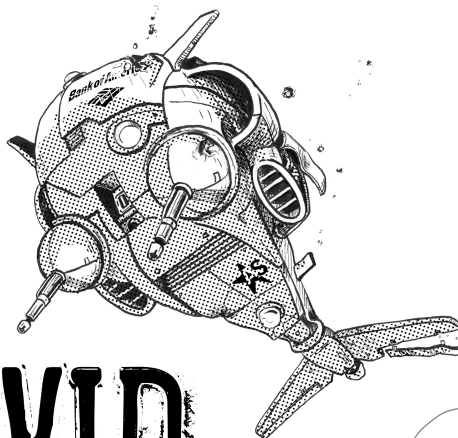


THE DEATH OF DAVID PICKETT

G.A. MATIASZ



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THE DEATH OF DAVID PICKETT

G.A. MATIASZ

The Death of David Pickett
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For Kay
my broken grace

ONE

David Pickett's death upset a lot of people.

Jesse Steinfeld heard about it a little before noon on Sunday. He was in that state between sleep and wakefulness in his Mission District shoebox apartment when his smartphone rang with the incessant guitar thrum of Leonard Cohen's "Partisan." He fumbled for the phone on the headboard as a breeze played with drapes and sunlight.

"Yo," Jesse answered.

"Jesse, Dave Pickett is dead." The shrill voice at the other end belonged to Angie Markham. "Dave was driving back from Baja with friends when their car flipped. His abdomen was sliced open and he was bleeding out. The Mexican authorities tried to medevac him, but he was declared DOA at the hospital. They finally did it."

"Huh?" He grunted, still chasing the tail end of a dream. "Who did what to whom?"

"Assassinated Dave," Angie said. "CIA, FBI, NSA, AFL-CIO, whoever. Haven't you been listening?"

Jesse hung up. He'd never liked Angie's sharp, accusatory way of speaking, even when he'd had a brief relationship with her two years ago. He eased out of his double bed and walked three steps into the kitchenette, where he turned on the programmed coffeemaker. He walked a half-dozen steps back the other way into the bathroom for a quick shower and shave, washing away the remnants of last night's Retromingent concert at the Korova Bar.

Jesse knew David from the city's music scene and the Bay Area's political milieu. They'd met, in passing, at the Skeleton Club back when he was still sleeping with Angie. At a party, happening, or concert he was aware of Pickett's crew as the storm on the horizon and of David as the eye of that storm. Jesse had stumbled upon a provocative rally turned street fight staged by David and his cohorts in support of bike messengers' rights a year ago, and had purchased six doses of a powerful designer psychedelic, jamrax, from David at Stumpy's six months ago. But Jesse still considered him only an acquaintance at best.

The aroma of Colombian coffee saturated the apartment by the time he had toweled off. He poured fragrant coffee into an oversized Foamy-the-Squirrel mug before he dressed from a tiny closet in the minuscule combination living/dining room. He put on black Converse high-tops, narrow black jeans,

classic Catholic Spit black-and-white band T-shirt, and a black Dickies hoodie, then took his coffee onto the fire escape and relaxed.

David Pickett had been a fixture of Bay Area progressive politics for the past decade or so. He had a solid reputation as a community organizer, labor militant, and political powerhouse. Yet David's notoriety in edge politics was even more pronounced as a commie impresario, a left of the Left raconteur, and an anarcho-provocateur. He was the founder of What's Left?— an extremely popular website, a volatile social networking site, and a print-version zine with a circulation approaching two million. His powerful speech during the “Fuck Work, Fuck Borders” conference three years ago had gone viral, making him a rising star of the emerging revolutionary Synarky movement. And his popular podcast series “FSU” averaged more than eight million unique monthly subscribers.

Jesse soaked in the afternoon sun as he gradually caffeinated himself. The weather pattern was standard for San Francisco in midsummer; the overcast had burned off, leaving blue skies. The gray fog bank out past Twin Peaks looked like a line of surf threatening to break. The smells from a taqueria down the block wafted up to the fire escape. The thirty-six-ounce mug, having declared “Squirrely Rage” to the world, was half empty.

David Pickett had also founded Drinkers United International, an anti-union of sorts inspired by Oscar Wilde's quip that “Work is the curse of the drinking classes.” Under his leadership, DUI gained prominence through its tireless relief work for and armed defense of the poor and homeless after the 2021 earthquake. Its various front activities included mobile hiring halls and interest-specific social clubs. DUI became infamous, however, for a number of wildcat actions involving software coders, fast food workers, day laborers, sex workers, and the like—actions with a flair for the spectacular that often turned violent. The violent assault on the Bohemian Grove in Monte Rio by DUI was the stuff of legend.

Jesse rinsed the empty mug in the sink and set up next morning's drip, then took the stairs down to the street. He had a freelance archiving job tomorrow but nothing that interfered with his boho lifestyle. First stop, Sam's Sons Deli for their Reuben sandwich. Second stop was Stumpy's Pub for a pint or three of Belgian ale. Jesse suspected that David's comrades and friends, perhaps even some of his frenemies and enemies, were already beginning to gather at Stumpy's. David's political milieu was Jesse's by acquaintance and happenstance. He started on a refreshing walk up Guerrero, past the homeless encampment stirring to life at the corner of 24th.

After the 2021 tech bubble collapse, out-of-work techies fled the Mission

District, which effectively halted the neighborhood's contentious gentrification. But the popular movement to declare autonomy for the Mission District, and to call itself the "Mission Commune," had so far failed. The City of San Francisco disregarded petitions, referenda, elections, demonstrations, and street violence. Instead, it increased surveillance and harassment of the indigent and destitute, especially around rich areas. The Liberty Hill Historic District ahead was just such a tony neighborhood of mini-mansions and upscale condos in the midst of the Mission that escalated in wealth from east to west until it was virtually a walled enclave catercorner to Mission Dolores Park. No surprise that its residents paid dearly for a variety of private security services to protect themselves from the rabble living and breathing a mere street corner away. Top among them were patrols by unmanned aerial vehicles.

Jesse saw the drone whir around the corner from 22nd Street onto Guerrero toward Alvarado bearing logos for Ambassador Security and Bank of America. "Fucking PUD," he said under his breath. UAVs were often called PUDs, an acronym for the public—or private—urban drones deployed with increasing frequency in and around the Bay Area. Like the word drone itself, PUD was a somewhat rude term that had entered the vernacular. People who lived in the Mission had an explosive antipathy for PUDs, public or private, which went beyond the general dislike for being watched in public spaces. Except during riots, however, few people messed with heavily armed law-enforcement UAVs. Private urban drones were another matter, even though more of the private ones were allowed to carry and use weapons, thanks to California's castle doctrine. This one did.

The reason that the drone ventured beyond its turf was not immediately evident. The response to its intrusion was immediate and violent. Two powerful green lasers from farther down Guerrero pinned the PUD, barely visible in daylight, yet effective in causing the drone to react. Instead of retreating, however, the UAV held its ground, hovering above the LED streetlight.

"Cease and desist," a mechanical male voice boomed from the drone. *"You are in violation of section—"*

Five more lasers targeted the drone. Rioters used wrist-rocket slingshots, power catapults, stone bows, and human power to hurl rocks, pieces of brick, bottles, marbles, ball bearings, nuts, and bolts at the drone. Blinded by lasers, pummeled by projectiles, again the drone refused to retreat, for whatever reason.

"Cease and desis—" The PUD crackled, lost the final consonant, listed, then dropped a meter. A distant police siren sounded. The drone got off two wild shots before spiraling down to smash into two parked cars.

A roar of triumph greeted the PUD's crash and two dozen street people ran

for the drone's twisted wreckage. An SUV with Ambassador Security markings skidded into the intersection and three men brandishing guns piled out. But the crowd brandished firearms, too. The dozen individuals not holding guns began dragging the broken drone down the street, screaming "*Our streets!*" and "*Back the fuck off!*"

The crowd moved toward a pickup truck that had just pulled up. Three armed men hauled the drone into the truck as the security guards yelled, "*Stop, motherfuckers!*" By the time two cop cars arrived on the scene, the truck sped off and the other armed civilians melted into the neighborhood with the rest of the crowd, leaving both public and private cops frustrated, talking to each other.

Jesse left as police reinforcements arrived. He circumvented the confrontation's dénouement with Sam's Sons Deli once again in mind, replaying the fight as he picked up his sandwich. A flock of iridescent green-and-red parrots squawked in the palm trees above him as he walked along Dolores.

Stumpy's was a dive bar, pure and proud, in the Lower Haight east of the Wiggle. Featuring a selection of sixty-plus draft and ninety-plus bottled beers, it had been unofficial headquarters for DUI, and David Pickett, for the past four years. Angie Markham also kept propaganda at the bar for her more staid Precarious Union, which was a direct reaction to DUI and to David's bold, rabble-rousing political style. The rivalry between them often tried loyalties. Angie was eighteen years older than Jesse, and their relationship had been rocky. She drank heavily, and was often passed out by evening. He found her in her apartment one night raving, frantically brushing off imaginary spiders, desperately searching for her car keys and the money to buy more alcohol. Shaken and unnerved, never having seen a case of the DTs, Jesse nevertheless had the presence of mind to hide her purse.

Blatz's "Fuk Shit Up" blasted from the open door in the red-and-black facade. Jesse entered the dark bar, the atmosphere stinking of beer, sweat, cigarettes, and vomit, found a stool at the bar, and placed the sandwich on the worn wooden countertop.

"What'll it be?" the heavily tattooed bartender asked.

"Pint of Lucifer," Jesse said, and unwrapped his sandwich. As he suspected, a sizable crowd in the back was talking up David Pickett's death and the radical demo in Dolores Park later that evening. That and the takedown of the PUD. He didn't recognize anyone so he started eating in peace. The pint arrived. Sam's Sons' Reuben Combo was perfection. The pint was beyond perfection. When Jesse looked back up, Stenny Amps had materialized on the barstool next to him.

"Long time, Jesse," Stenny said. Jesse noted the covetous glance toward the sandwich and the lengthy longing look at the beer. The stench of Stenny's crusty

clothing assaulted his nose. “Free Speech” by Citizen Fish played in the background.

“How’s the band going?” Jesse asked, quickly draining the pint. “What’s the name again?”

“Dead Girls Can’t Say No,” Stenny said, and watched as Jesse started in on the other half of the Reuben. “We’ve got a gig next Friday, at the Chatsubo.”

“Good to hear it,” he said between bites. “So, what’s your take on David Pickett?”

“Nothing to say,” Stenny said, with a dismissive wave of a hand. “He was off-roading with a bunch of his Drinking United cadre in the Sonoran Desert. Fancy Yamaha motocross bikes. He took a spill, sustained a lot of damage from rocks, had a lot of internal injuries. Died from an internal hemorrhage in the abdomen. End of story.”

“Nothing untoward?”

“Not a goddamn nefarious thing about it.”

“Wow.” Jesse finished up the sandwich. “Glad to hear the real story. Lots of rumors going round.”

“Well, I got the genuine report,” Stenny said. “You heard about taking down that PUD? I was right there—”

“I was half a block away, watching the whole thing.” Jesse crumpled the sandwich paper and stuffed it into the bag.

“Oh, wasn’t that something.” Stenny offered a weak grin, then dodged Jesse’s eyes. “Ya know, I’m a bit strapped for cash until our show, and I was wondering—”

“Hold that thought,” Jesse said, and stood up from his stool, abandoning an empty pint glass and crumbs. “I’ll be back. Got to take a wicked leak.”

When Jesse got to the unisex bathrooms at mid-bar and turned back, Stenny had evaporated. *Fucking moocher*. There wasn’t much of a line, and he didn’t have much of a pee. Just as he was about to turn back for another beer, Ari Moser came out of one of the toilets.

“Well, well, if it isn’t Jesse the Zionist,” Ari said, with a sly smile. “How’s Romi these days?”

Romi was Jesse’s pretty younger sister whom Ari had been eager to sex up a while back. The man’s desire to sleep with her had been inflamed by her making *aliya* and then joining up with the IDF for her mandatory military service, where she served in the joint US/Israeli nuclear operation Wrath of God.

“Romi is out of the Army,” Jesse said. “She’s married and has a baby.”

“Shame,” Ari mused. “Buy you a beer?”

They were still on the edge of the scrum in which Pickett’s death was

discussed and debated. Amenity's "This Is Our Struggle" roared over the sound system. Cigarette smoke rolled from one end of the bar to the other. Ari had a Racer 5, Jesse a Black Damnation VI. They faced the mirror behind the bar, with Ari clocking every passing female.

"Too bad about the fourth Intifada," Ari said, after a gulp. "What with Hezbollah still mired deep in what's left of Syria and the rest of the Middle East reduced to nuclear chaos, it looks like Gaza is going to get razed."

"Dude, I'm not playing that game," Jesse said, and drank. "You win. I concede. You're a better anti-Zionist Jew than I am."

"Hey, dude," Ari smirked. "No more pissing contest, okay? Your sister is still one smoking hot chick, Israeli or not. Married or not."

"So, what do you make of Pickett's death?"

"Way I heard it, he was down in Baja, working with the PRD-affiliated Authentic Labor Front." Ari watched the ass of a voluptuous redhead as she sashayed toward the bathroom. "And there was something definitely not kosher about his demise."

"How so?"

"Well, for one thing, it appears that the Arellano-Félix Cartel had a hand in helping the Federales run him off the road. For another, no hospital on either side of the border has any record of admitting him, alive or dead. For a third, US authorities are remarkably reticent about the circumstances around Dave's death."

"So, you're saying this was political."

"No doubt about it," Ari said, finishing his pint. He caught the wink of a stunning brunette in the mirror from behind him. "So, dude, gotta run. Give Romi my regards."

Jesse ordered a dark Armageddon ale and considered what he'd been told. Two for and one against David Pickett's death being political. And yet he considered the odds to be even, he thought as he systematically worked on the pint. Stenny Amps was a freeloader and a bum and loved to exaggerate his own exploits. But he was not prone to wild conspiracy theories. Ari Moser's more reasoned, if darker, analysis of the political implications of Pickett's passing was more than offset by the tinfoil-hat idiocy of Angie Markham's alcohol-fueled conspiratorial ruminations. Speaking of which...

"Stay fucking right there, Jesse Steinfeld!" Angie's piercing screech cut through the dense barroom din, even as L7's "This Ain't the Summer of Love" blared above it all. She was small, barely over five feet, but Jesse could see her from across the room trying to shove her way through the unyielding throng. He guzzled the rest of his beer in record time as he lost sight of her, but he could

still hear her. *“Don’t you fucking leave!”*

He ducked down from his stool, then wove his way, crouching, toward the dazzling light of the open door. An agonizing minute later, he reached the door, the day, and freedom. He looked back to see Angie standing at the doorway, distraught. Jesse raced down the sidewalk and turned the corner on Fillmore. He ran past the grocery store murals, past Laussat Street, and past more murals adorning a Cambodian restaurant. Only then did he stop to catch his breath.

It was late afternoon, approaching evening. His smartphone kept ringing, so he turned it off. An airbus wheezed down Fillmore. He grabbed a ride by swiping his phone’s Clipper app and settled into a seat next to an elderly man dressed in a suit and tie and reading audibly from a Bible. Jesse was enjoying the effects of his three pints of strong ale, so when he switched to a Muni train at Church headed for the park and the demonstration, he was feeling no pain. The sun was nestling into that fog bank above Twin Peaks.

The Muni rattled up along the west side of Dolores Park, giving Jesse a view of the rally in progress on the green soccer fields. He disembarked. Parrots wheeled overhead, chirping and shrieking. He saw Toby Barnabas get off the train, too. He was a tall lanky Mohawked man he knew from hanging around the periphery of Pickett’s militant circles. He was dressed in black with a leather jacket sporting the familiar Mohawked skulls of The Exploited’s *Fuck the System* album. Toby walked, chatting with his über-Goth girlfriend, Cynthia, “Tank Girl” on her leather jacket. They did not see Jesse.

Jesse didn’t close in on the rally. Not right away. First he bought four Boston cream donuts. Then he circled around the rally, listening to the speeches as darkness descended. Perhaps four hundred people were standing around. A cop drone lazily wheeled above the gathering. Unlike the mob that immediately took down the encroaching PUD earlier in the day, an air of impending trouble hung over the crowd. No fan of anarchist smashy-smashy, Jesse nevertheless felt compelled to stay by the threat of sweet violence. He thought he saw Ari Moser among the rabble, but lost sight of him. A wind had started to whip up, blowing snippets of words and sentences away. Much of the rest echoed unintelligibly around the park, along with Public Enemy’s “Party for Your Right to Fight.”

“...David Pickett was an enemy of the state, a target of every American police, security, and military agency...”

The gathering was overwhelmingly young, about evenly male and female, and dressed principally in black. There was a pungent smell of marijuana and tobacco throughout those assembled. People kept arriving as Jesse stayed at the margin. Toby and Cynthia were in the thick of it.

“...ickett’s legacy was to stand for the helpless, to stand with the

downtrodden, to stand against the rich and powerful. David Pickett was a friend of the impoverished multitude and an enemy of the wealthy few. D...

The crowd had swollen to well over a thousand and many were masked up. It was fully dark now. The clinking of glass bottles accompanied the smell of gasoline. A tight knot of miscreants surrounded Toby and snickered at one of his jokes. Toby flashed something, quickly and surreptitiously, then hid it in his jacket.

"...time to avenge our fallen friend, our murdered brother, our assassinated comrade! It's time to wreak our havoc against the cops, against capital and state, against all the powers-that-be! It's time to MOVE!"

Hoodies came up, balaclavas were donned, black bandannas were tied around faces. Full black-bloc mode. And the mob surged toward 18th and Dolores, toward rows of businesses, toward the nearest police station.

"One, two, three, four; this is fucking class war!"

Glow sticks, flashlights, and lasers pierced the gloom. Here and there, a fiery torch burned. Jesse joined the crowd at the tail end as the crowd occupied the middle of the street. A second PUD joined the first, and both kept tabs on the march.

"Racist, sexist, anti-gay; SFPD go away!"

Tires popped, and car windows shattered. Car alarms howled and squealed. Bystanders watched the unruly march from upper-story windows. Gas masks appeared. Lasers lanced up from the protest onto the UAVs, the crowd hoping to keep the drones blinded.

"What do we want?"

"Dead cops!"

"When do we want them?"

"Now!"

Jesse could see the crowd marching toward the Mission Street Police Station. He moved to the sidewalk, where he watched the police quickly reinforce the line of officers behind the standing wall of steel barricades, between the station and the mob. The black-clad rabble roared in response.

"Whose streets?"

"Our streets!"

"Fuck the police!"

The mob used paint bombs, bricks, bottles, rocks, metal hardware, and debris, primarily against the station and secondarily toward the multiplying drones. Dressed in fire-resistant riot suits, the cops raised their shields and sprayed the crowd with tear gas. Pivoting UAVs also let loose a rain of pepper bombs and flash-bang grenades. By then, Jesse had moved to the opposite

sidewalk and pushed his way down Valencia, past the riot proper and out of range of the gas. The second wave involved smoke bombs to obscure the mob and people hurling Molotov cocktails, until the line of cops appeared engulfed in flames. One PUD veered away and crash-landed behind the station. But the shields and fire-retardant uniforms, plus a constant dry spray of sodium bicarbonate from nozzles in the station, rapidly contained the inferno.

Then the police launched liquid pepper spray and high-power microwave weapons, designed to dispense excruciating pain as subcutaneous heat or intracranial sound. The HPM antennas swiveled down from the roof and powered up with subsonics. The air above the riot rippled ominously. The mini-insurrection redoubled their attack—the projectiles, the paint and smoke bombs, and the Molotovs—plus their ace: glitter bombs. Thrown high into the air, the fine metal glitter bombs exploded and holy hell broke loose. Lightning streamers, sheets of lightning, ball lightning erupted between falling glitter and the microwave weapons in violent claps and crackles until the microwave devices short-circuited and the police station roof caught fire. Two PUDs shot sparks and careened into the building.

The battle for the station proved only a diversion, however. As soon as the glitter bombs went off, the cops had to respond to their burning building. The organized assault turned into absolute chaos as hordes of black-clad rioters ran into the heart of Valencia Street's restaurant row. Cars, stores, windows, restaurants, pedestrians—everything was fair game. Diners, indoors and out, ran for their lives. The sound of breaking glass punctuated the night. Smoke bombs blew up, roping the night air with thick, acrid clouds. Rioters brandishing pipes and wooden clubs felled gawkers and bystanders. Gasoline bombs blossomed into conflagrations. Broken glass carpeted the streets.

Jesse ran through the spreading anarchy hoping to escape it. He coughed, gasped, and his eyes watered. At 22nd, he froze. The plate-glass windows were broken, but the blinking neon signage—"Spencer's"—wasn't. A burly crew-cut man, dressed in chef's apron, barred the door to the partially trashed, empty restaurant. The restaurateur held a pump-action shotgun across his chest. "Come one step further, assholes," he bellowed. "*And you'll be eating this!*"

The crowd surrounded him in a half-circle, taunting him, but from a respectful distance. Suddenly, a tall, lanky, Mohawked man stepped into the space between them. He wore a black balaclava, and his black leather jacket bore a logo: *The Exploited. Fuck the System*. "Here's for all those shitty wages you paid me and my fellow workers! Here's for David Pickett!" He yanked a Glock from his jacket and fired 9mm rounds into the restaurateur. *One. Two. Three. Four.*

TWO

Bloody sunrise seeped along the eastern sky. Jesse huddled on the fire escape outside his apartment. To the northwest, the sights and sounds of the riot faded with the new day.

He hadn't slept all night. Terrible images burned his memory. The gun, flashing under streetlights. The four terrible shots. Each shot loud, tracing murder through the dark air. The shooter's arm recoiling. The restaurateur collapsing. The smell of cordite. The smell of blood. Blood flowing across the sidewalk. The shotgun lying on the sidewalk.

Jesse ran. Everybody ran. He didn't know how or when he got back home to his apartment. He just remembered cowering in the dark. Terrified. Crying. Praying.

The morning was painfully clear. Not a shred of overcast in the sharp blue sky, not a wisp of fog over Twin Peaks. The sun sluiced golden over East Bay's hills. Jesse unsteadily grabbed the railing to his fire escape and pulled himself up. Trembling, he stumbled into his apartment, fumbled for the light in his kitchenette, and turned on the coffeemaker. He noticed the vaguely familiar rumpled waxy bag on the kitchen counter. Awful recollections flooded his brain as he opened the bag. It was filled with crumbled donut cake, flaked chocolate icing, and smeared vanilla custard. The stink punched him in the nose. Jesse leaned over the sink and vomited. He continued to throw up until it became uncontrolled retching, then dry heaves. He collapsed onto the linoleum and clutched his aching stomach.

He got back onto his feet, weak and shaking. He turned on the faucet and rinsed away the puke until the fresh smell of coffee replaced the rank odor of barf.

Time to get out into the morning and to the day's job. Jesse showered, hosed the vomit from his mouth, put on an orange Burning Bush T-shirt and a gray sweatshirt, and hefted an empty thermos. He bought copies of the *SF Chronicle* and *San Jose Mercury News* and drank half of the coffee before settling onto a bench at the Mission Playground and Pool. A police UAV floated along the street. "Local Militant's Death Triggers Mission Riot," the *Chronicle* proclaimed, whereas the *Mercury News*' headline was more blunt: "One Dead, 326 Injured, 144 Arrested in Anarchist Riot." He read the reports on the Valencia Street riot, including the opinion pieces about the incompetence of the

police to protect anyone or prevent damage to local businesses, then ripped out the articles on David Pickett's death. Folding the crisp pages into his back pocket, he discarded the remainder of the newspaper. Jesse needed time to analyze the news items, with more than caffeine to fuel him. His favorite cafe, Hopwell's, was down the block.

"Fill 'er up," he said as he presented the waitress his thermos, then looked at the menu. "I want the breakfast special."

He switched on his smartphone while waiting for his meal. Forty-two messages, seventy-one texts. Eighteen of the voice messages were from Angie Markham, the first ten ranging from "Where the fuck are you?" to "You asshole!" Four from her were simple hang-ups. Twelve texts out of twenty were of a similar nature, including three all-caps messages: "THEY MURDERED DAVID PICKETT!" Her tone changed abruptly after he'd fled from Stumpy's. The calls and texts that followed begged him to call her back and please forgive her, pleading, "We need to talk" and "We can work through this." Jesse felt a pang in his heart, but he deleted them all, then switched his phone to vibrate. Best to keep a meditative state of mind, he thought, and avoid confrontation. And nasty messages.

When breakfast arrived, he concentrated on the food, savoring each bite between each breath. Only when he'd cleaned his plate, only when he'd paid the check, only when he'd stepped back into the burnished San Francisco morning did the terrors of the night before return. He felt oddly refreshed, however, for not having slept in nearly twenty-four hours and returned to the apartment for his equipment.

"Shit," Jesse mumbled when he reached his door at the top of the stairs. He pulled the card from between door and jamb. Beneath the SFPD logo, the card read "Investigator Michael Van Cornin" above the usual address and telephone contact information. On the back, a cellphone number had been written, in pen. "Shit, fuck, piss," Jesse said.

Jesse snagged a notebook, pens, markers, label maker, and his first-generation Apple Fetch, which he stuffed into his knapsack before rushing out the door. He took the direct route over to Valencia and then north until he was surrounded by drones, idling cop cars and conferring police officers—and rolls of yellow crime tape. The sidewalk around Spencer's Restaurant was completely sealed off for a quarter block in each direction. The Mission Street Police Station was open for business, despite obvious signs of damage. He tried to look inconspicuous even as he minutely observed his surroundings. Once past all the wreckage, he turned east at the homeless camp on 16th Street and walked to 2930 16th.

The old, four-story, red brick building occupied much of the block. Known as the Redstone Labor Temple, or simply the Redstone Building, the structure was home to scores of labor unions, nonprofit organizations, and various and sundry artists. Jesse entered using a duplicate key and a combination to the Digilock. He had access thanks to his friendship with graphic designer and silkscreen artist Marco Loyola, who shared a fourth floor, west-facing office with an artist collective calling itself Chicanosaurus. Once in the funky, poster-and-mural-encrusted lobby, he climbed the stairs. He tread carefully down the fourth-floor hall because Marco's fellow collective members were not very welcoming of Jesse's white ass. The door chimed with the opening notes of Victor Jara's "Venceremos." Fortunately, the musty office was unoccupied.

Jesse had studied Library and Information Science at City College, interned in Digital Archiving at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library, and had remained sporadically employed ever since. He'd met Marco through the William James Work Association, a worker-run temp agency operated by David Pickett's DUI, at the onset of the Marco's multiple sclerosis. Jesse started working for him scanning, digitizing, massaging, and cataloguing the artist's work and papers using Photoshop software and Macintosh computers. Marco used the office space primarily for storage of his prints and files, as advanced MS now kept him confined to his tiny Inner Mission cottage.

Jesse had spent hours taking in the contents of the office while working for Marco. The floor-to-ceiling filing system that took up most of one wall; flat file drawers and vertical hanging racks, constructed of varnished, weathered oak. The iconography in photography, silkscreening, painting, lithography, even graffiti depicted historical political, religious, and artistic figures from Spain and the Americas. He spread out the contents of his knapsack over the work table by the window, then lifted the window shades, mindful not to disturb the reflector telescope positioned with a focus on the BART plaza a block away. Pen-and-ink drawings painstakingly rendering aspects of the plaza were taped on the window jambs near the telescope.

The Fetch picked up a Wi-Fi signal immediately and Marco's password worked. The office boombox had a mixtape of *corridos* and *norteños* he played low. He put in a solid two hours on Marco's archiving project. In the process of scrupulously labeling and alphabetizing a cardboard box full of document CDs, he discovered a cryptic item. One CD in a worn white sleeve bore a dingy Post-it that read: "HOOLIGAN-X = D PICKETT?" CDs were antiquated technology and electronic players were ancient history, so he was at a loss. He put the sleeve and its contents into the knapsack before turning his attention to Pickett and the riot. He looked up a number of local news websites, laid out the pages ripped

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