

Overlook

Enrique saw the tat on the man immediately, maybe even earlier than that, most likely before he woke up that morning. He looked around the dealership and realized that no one on the sales floor had paid even the slightest attention to the tall man who stepped out of dusty red Dodge Ram pickup truck, driven by a dark-haired woman who looked like all the other women back home in Culiacán did at this time of year, wisps of hair flying around in the wind, tank tops with thin straps that competed for attention with slightly wider bra straps across dark-skinned shoulders. She looked through the back window of the truck as she backed out from the customer parking area, never even looking back to the tall man she had dropped off. Even though it was a day with triple-digit heat indexes, the tall man rolled his sleeves down and buttoned them at the wrist, hiding the tattoo below a thin layer of sharply pressed white cotton.

Enrique did not wait to see which of the salespeople looked up to take notice of the potential customer in the nicely pressed dress shirt and a good pair of jeans. He gathered his broom and mop and the small bag of trash from the assistant sales manager's trash can, loaded up his cleaning cart and turned down the hall from the showroom back towards the service department. He noticed Doug, the service manager, stepping into the bathroom off the customer lounge. Enrique waited a bit, and then parked his cart right outside the men's room. Doug was standing at the urinal as Enrique hurried into the stall. He slid the latch closed, stood in front of the toilet and jammed his fingers as far as he could down his throat. The reflex was immediate,

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and his lunch came tumbling back up and made a satisfyingly major splash in the bowl of the toilet.

“Whoa, man,” Doug said, “You O.K. bud?”

Enrique spooled out some toilet paper to wipe a little bit of the vomit from face.

“Yes, yes, I think I’m OK,” he said. “Just something bad from lunch, or maybe that stomach bug that is going around.”

Doug by this time had zipped up and was briskly washing his hands. “You ought to go home, Rickie,” Doug offered, “No need to spread something around.”

“I think I will,” Enrique said. “Can you tell Mr. Adamson?”

Doug mumbled his agreement as he left the bathroom.

Enrique left his cart where it was and walked straight out the back of the dealership through the customer lounge entrance to employee parking to his Honda Accord, which was battered a bit but still ran good even now two years after coming to work at the dealership, a month after Enrique got released. He eased along the side street towards 3rd Avenue, and as he pulled up to the stop sign to check traffic, he stole a quick glance across the lot. He caught a glimpse of the white shirt and could see the tall man talking to Duane about one of the new Chargers - dark, inky, glossy black with tinted windows and elaborate chrome rims. That was a shame. Enrique liked Duane, who would always call him by his name, not Rickie like most everyone else on the sales floor. Duane shook the tall man’s hand and the tall man pretended to laugh in the way the men like him did in Culiacàn, the way the men surrounding his father at his leather shop had pretended to laugh at his father’s nervous joke the last day Enrique saw him.

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The tall man called out something to Duane who laughed and waved his hand at the comment as he walked across the lot to the test drive key box. The tall man stood with his hands on his hips, slowly turning his head to scan the lot, working his way professionally and methodically towards the direction of Enrique at the stop sign. Enrique turned his head away, then turned on to 3rd Avenue in the opposite direction.

Enrique drove as far as he could go on 3rd Avenue, from the busy five-lane version near the dealership to the four-lane section through the nice part of town where Duane and the other sales people lived, then to where it narrowed down to just two lanes and changed its name and began to wind up the barren hills outside of town. He turned off at the scenic overlook and parked, looking back down the mountain, seeing the city the way he had seen it the first time he had come here. He traced his route down 3rd Avenue to where he could just make out the spread of the Dodge dealership, dozens of windshields reflecting the light of the afternoon sun back at Enrique, and he slowly dozed off in the warm car.

When he awoke, the sun was just barely above the mountains to the west of town, and the lights were coming on across the valley. He looked for any activity at the dealership, but he couldn't make out anything unusual. He drove back towards town, going from two lanes to four lanes to the five lanes to the neighborhood where the dealership was located. He slowed up so the traffic light would catch him. Looking down the side street towards the employee lot, Enrique noticed a policeman holding a flashlight for Doug as he was trying to unlock Duane's car. As Enrique pulled away from the red light, he could see the brightly-lit sales floor, mostly filled with employees but with the blue uniform of a policeman mixed here and there among them, some of them tightly huddled around a woman he recognized from last year's Christmas party as Duane's wife. She was sitting in a chair in Duane's office, bent over in two, her hands

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running over and over through her hair, looking as lost and distraught as Enrique's mother had at his father's funeral, the moment before a pudgy boy in basketball shorts and a tight t-shirt walked up to her with smile and shot her in the forehead, and Enrique and everyone scattered to the desert, and then on to other places.

Two of the TV stations in town had set up live remotes in the corner of the parking lot, positioned to use the crowded sales floor as their backdrop, framing the shot as best they could to catch a glimpse of the new widow, their top crime reporters looking over their notes, excited to share the news. As Enrique drove past, the gap in the line of new Chargers parked along the street appeared in his rear-view mirror, as eternal and bottomless as ink.