

SUPER BOWL SUNDAY AT WORK

A beaten down car rolled into a lot and parked. The lot sat in front a retail store that had seen better days - the white lines had faded and the cracks on the cement and asphalt were numerous - even the appearance of the store front appealed for a new sign, paint, and lighting fixtures. Despite this sale signs advertised television super bowl deals on its large front windows - announcing to the world that this establishment remained in business.

The drivers side door from the parked derelict (a late eighties Ford Mustang) opened up. Guillermo Quezada, or *GQ* as he liked to be called, stuck his head out and puked. He let go of whatever it was he had late last night onto the asphalt. He spat and wiped his mouth with a napkin and closed the door. This morning, he certainly was no *GQ* - nor did he feel as if he might become this persona anytime soon.

“God help me,” Guillermo said as he sat in his car. He wondered why they got into a brawl at the bar late last night. He wished his hangover and sore jaw would go away. He grabbed a black plastic bag on the passenger seat and pulled out a small bottle of Irish Baileys. He then reached for his coffee cup and opened the lid and poured a shot of the Baileys into the coffee and swirled it with a stirrer. He could still taste the bile in his mouth and so he rolled the window down once more and spat again. He rolled it back up, smelled the coffee and gently took a sip. This tasted good to him. He sniffled and

blew his nose. He thought - this might be a while before I feel normal again. "When will I learn," he uttered.

Another car pulled up next to Guillermo's. It's was an older model Nissan Z. Someone stepped out of the vehicle and came around toward Guillermo's car. "That's sick," said Chris, a tall thin man in his early twenties. He ambled over to the store's entrance and lit up a cigarette.

Guillermo checked the time on his cell phone - it was 10:15. The store should have opened for business fifteen minutes ago. He mustered his strength and exited the vehicle. GQ, with coffee in hand, approached Chris at the entrance.

"You look bombed," said Chris.

"And you got a shiner," Guillermo said as he noticed Chris's black eye. "What about me?"

Chris shook his head. "You got nothing."

"What a night!" Guillermo said as he moved his jaw side-to-side.

"You got a sore jaw?" asked Chris.

"Yeah, I got hit in the jaw. You?" said Guillermo.

"Just my eye. After he hit me in my eye, I knocked him down," said Chris.

"I remember he was on the ground asking for time out," said Guillermo.

"I know. He was asking for time out. Can you believe that chump?" said Chris.

"At least my guy ran away after I socked him a few times," said Guillermo.

"Friggin wuss, you take his punches but he can't take yours. You're a bad ass GQ," said Chris to Guillermo as they bumped fists.

“I know.” Even though Guillermo didn’t remember what started the fight and felt embarrassed to ask. The last thing he recalled was them finishing a few rounds of pool and then sitting at a high bar table with drinks having a good time and then they’re outside with two angry guys arguing. That’s right; now it clicks in Guillermo’s head. One of the guys sat his beer right on our table so he could shoot at the pool table. But Chris didn’t like that and purposely spilled the guy’s drink. The beer ran off the table and onto the floor. Guillermo remembered the guy looking down at his spilled beer on the floor and then at Chris, who confidently smiled back at the guy. This must have ticked the guy off something fierce because he wanted an apology and Chris wouldn’t give it to him. Then the punches flew. What fireworks! Guillermo’s memory faded after the brawl; yet somehow he made it home. 2:05 o’clock was the last hour he recalled checking and then the morning bell ringing, waking him - everything was a blur. Goodness! It was only a little after 10 o’clock and it already felt as if it might become the longest day of his life.

Guillermo had his keys out trying to get the front door open, when at this moment, another vehicle pulled in to the parking lot. Guillermo managed to open the door and turned to see if it might be a customer or another employee. It was Tim, about average height and a little on the heavy side, another sales rep.

“What’s up fellas?” Tim said as he got out of his vehicle.

“You’re late,” said Guillermo.

“I had someone blowing me this morning. What’s your excuse?”

The three of them chuckled and entered the retail store; really a large warehouse with televisions and home theater systems everywhere. And everything was for sale: televisions, surround systems, audio video furniture, home theater chairs, even the

furniture decorations. Unfortunately, despite the wide selection of AV electronics and accessories and somewhat capable staff - the stores business was declining. Sales were down. New owners and new management were taking it in an unproductive direction. There had been a purge of the old managers and veteran sales force. In came a younger generation of managers and sales reps; and these kids had a long learning curve. Many of the once loyal clients were wary of the unfamiliar faces and instead decided to shop around.

Tim, Chris, and Guillermo went about the store turning on all the audio video equipment; TV's, AV receivers, lights, power strips, and cable boxes. The guys set up the super bowl pre-game show on all the televisions. They finished getting everything powered on and gathered at the front register counter and sat down behind it.

They brought out their drinks and breakfast. Chris drank from his Monster can, and ate a ham and cheese biscuit. Tim drank hot chocolate and munched on a bear claw donut. Guillermo put aside what was left of his breakfast sandwich, unable to eat at the moment, and sipped his spiked coffee. All were quiet as they filled their bellies.

Guillermo adjusted himself in his chair and glanced at the other two as they ate and drank. He recalled the power went out yesterday and no one had bothered to reset the security cameras. He thought why not and brought out, from his pants pocket, the Irish bailey bottle. He poured more into the coffee - the other two watched him. "Anyone want some?" Guillermo asked. Both Chris and Tim raised their drinks. Guillermo slid the bottle across the counter; Chris grabbed it and poured a splash of the creamy liqueur into his monster drink, he handed it to Tim who promptly poured it into his hot chocolate. Now, the three were getting their drink on at work.

“When do you guys think the first customers will come in?” asked Tim.

“Usually, on super bowl Sunday, they walk in at noon,” answered Guillermo.

“Asians will be the first. Any takers?” said Chris.

Both Tim and Guillermo shook their heads.

“Who else will come in?” asked Tim.

“Persians, some Arabs, and anybody that doesn’t watch football,” said Guillermo.

“I thought everybody watched football. Isn’t the super bowl the most watched game in the world?” said Tim.

“No. The super bowl is most watched game in the U.S. The rest of the world watches soccer and the Olympics. They don’t care about football,” said Guillermo.

“A billion motherfuckers watch it around the world,” Tim continued.

“Yeah, but there’s another couple of billion watching some faggot kicking a ball into a net,” added Chris.

“I didn’t know that,” said Tim.

“The world likes watching gay sports,” added Chris.

“I guess I’m glad I was born in Nebraska,” said Tim.

“Good for you ‘cause they don’t have cornhuskers in China but they sure have some job stealing son-of-bitches,” said Chris. Guillermo had heard Chris complain plenty of times about the lack of good jobs around Orange County, so this was nothing new for him. Chris pulled something out from his shirt pocket. “Hey, I’m going to fire this up. Anyone want to partake? It’s called the OG Fire,” Chris said as he offered a marijuana joint.

“Yeah!” said Tim.

Guillermo considered it and weighed it against his sore jaw and hangover headache. He didn't like being under the influence while trying to work out deals with his customers, but today was super bowl Sunday and he sure didn't feel like being here. "Why don't you guys hit it first? I'll watch the store. Then I'll hit it when one of you comes out," said Guillermo.

Both Tim and Chris looked at each other, nodded, and said, "All right." They took their drinks with them and left Guillermo at the counter. They trotted toward the restroom on the far side of the building.

"Don't forget to turn on the fan," said Guillermo.

Chris turned to faced him and winked.

Guillermo took another sip of his coffee - it felt good going down – some of his hangover aches and pains were beginning to fade. Maybe today won't be so long after all, especially after he puffed on that jay, and then who knows, in a little while he might start to feel normal again, or so he thought.

After awhile, Chris stepped out of the restroom. He waved at Guillermo to come get baked.

"Has Lisa shown up yet?" asked Chris.

"No, she's not here," a surprised Guillermo answered.

"She supposed to bring me lunch," said Chris.

"Lunch?! You just ate," said Guillermo.

"Yeah, but I'm still hungry," said Chris.

Guillermo grinned at him; food was the last thing on Guillermo's mind. He shuffled over to the restroom and opened the door and entered. Inside, Tim was puffing away like a magic dragon at what was left of the marijuana joint. "Dude, am I going to get a hit?" Guillermo asked.

"I didn't know you wanted any," said Tim.

"I said I wanted a hit," said Guillermo.

"I thought you said you didn't want a hit," said Tim.

"No. I said I wanted a hit," said Guillermo.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Here." Tim said sheepishly.

Guillermo snatched the nub - traditionally called a roach - now just a small one hit wonder. He took stock of it then glared at Tim.

"I'm sorry," Tim said and shrugged, "I didn't know."

"Go outside and find something to do," said Guillermo. Tim obediently left. Tim may not be the sharpest tool in the shed, Guillermo thought. Tim knew the McDonalds menu, that's across the street, better than the specs on most of the TV's. But sometimes the kid did try. Guillermo recalled once when a customer came in and wanted to know which TV's worked best with a laptop - Tim went to every TV to find out. Guillermo admired Tim's enthusiasm for some of the nerdy TV stuff but wished he learned how to sell. Guillermo wondered if he might have to ask for a replacement if Tim didn't step up his game.

Guillermo managed to smoke the jay, with a small piece of paper that acted as a cigarette filter; he burned it with a lighter, and took a single long drag. He held the smoke in his lungs for as long as he could and then blew it out. He watched the smoke get

sucked up into the ceiling fan. He realized he was high when he'd stared at the smoke going into the fan for a bit too long. He looked at himself in the mirror - his eyes were red and a bit heavy - this will do he thought. He opened the restroom door and wandered out.

Guillermo gazed around and only saw Tim. "Where's Chris?" asked Guillermo.

"I don't know," said Tim.

"OK. I'm going to do a walk-around," said Guillermo. He made his way to the back of the store, going in and out of rooms and home theater centers, checking to make sure everything was on and working. At the rear of the store he entered a room. This room once held TV projectors and even used one of the walls as a large TV screen. The entire wall had a built in TV screen for viewing and behind the screen was a small room which once had rear-display-projector. The idea was, if you had a large room, you could use one of the walls, cut it out and replaced it with a TV screen, and behind the screen would be the projector with the needed equipment. The size of the screen would be truly remarkable. At one time, these were the largest televisions in the state. But customers change their tastes, and now, flat screens were in and projectors were out. Today, the screen was still there, but the room where the projector once was was used for storage and as a break room for the sales staff.

Guillermo noticed a television in the room was turned off. He went to it and clicked it on. As the TV powered up he observed shadows behind the large television-wall-screen. They appeared to be two silhouettes; one seemed to be performing a sex act on the other. Guillermo opened the door (leading to the break room behind the screen) and peeked in. Inside, Chris was seated and eating a sandwich whilst his girlfriend Lisa - knelt and had her head down on him. They both stopped and looked up at him. I've got to

get them to stop, he thought, don't say anything embarrassing. "Customers are in the store," was all Guillermo could articulate.

"OK, we'll be out in a minute," Chris answered as he took another bite of his sandwich.

Guillermo closed the door. He assumed there were still no customers in the store and it seemed to work. He exited the room and almost ran into several customers trying to get in. "I'm sorry; we're experiencing technical difficulty in this room. We're working on it and we'll soon open it up. Thank you for your understanding," said Guillermo. An Asian family of four believed his story and moved over to another area of the store without saying anything to him. Guillermo closed the door behind him, and then made his way to the front register counter.

"Did you greet those customers?" Guillermo asked Tim.

"No." Tim answered.

"Tim, this is your job. To greet customers and create sales," said Guillermo.

"I'm not ready yet," said Tim.

"When will you be ready?" asked Guillermo.

"I don't know," said Tim.

"Tim, you got to get it together. You're going to get fired if you don't," said Guillermo.

"GQ, can I ask you something?" said Tim.

"Yeah, what's up?" said Guillermo.

"How do you know when this job isn't for you?" asked Tim.

“Well, in this job you got to like people. If you don’t like people, and helping people, well, you’re going to find sales and customer service to be a real hard job,” said Guillermo.

“I don’t think I like people that much, and I think this is a really hard job,” said Tim.

“OK, I guess we’ll talk to Marty James and see about getting you to do something else. Maybe, IT, the mailroom, or something,” said Guillermo.

“That would be cool, thanks,” Tim said, cheering up at the prospect.

“Yeah, it’s fine. I understand. This isn’t for everybody. For now, just hang in there. Okay?” said Guillermo.

“Okay,” Tim said and smiled.

Chris and his girl Lisa approached them at the register. The couple smiled contently. “Hey, you guys know Lisa, right?” Chris said.

Both Tim and Guillermo said “Yes,” and greeted Lisa.

“Nice seeing you guys. I gotta go. See ya all soon,” Lisa said.

“*Mucho gracias* for lunch, babe,” said Chris.

Lisa gave him a big smile, giggled, and left. The crew watched her leave the store, get in her car and drove off; each of them day-dreaming about an enchanted moment with Lisa.

“She so nice,” admired Tim.

“I know, I’m blessed,” said Chris.

“All right guys, I know it sucks to be here today but we gotta get back to work.” Guillermo said.

“I’ll take care of the *chinitos*,” Chris said as he liked to refer to Asian customers.

“Thanks,” said Guillermo.

“First, let me do a rail,” said Chris.

“A what?” Tim asked.

Chris pulled out a small clear plastic bag with some white powder inside it. He opened it up and began pouring some of the white powder onto the counter. He used his debit card to cut up the white powder.

“What is that?!” asked Guillermo.

“This is the Richard Nixon,” said Chris.

“The Richard Nixon?!”

“This shits corrupt. Lisa brought it for me, she so sweet,” said Chris. He inhaled a small white line through his nose using a rolled up dollar bill. “Here. Here’s a little of the All-American snowflake for you.” Chris said as he handed Guillermo the rolled up dollar bill.

Guillermo looked down - and sure enough there’s a small mound of the white stuff on the counter. It’s not a line but something a lot smaller. “I’m not doing that, not here, not at work,” said Guillermo.

“Stop being a pussy. It’s just a bump,” said Chris.

Guillermo scanned the store; so far only the Asian family of four was inside and they’re way in the back.

“There’s no one in the parking lot,” added Tim.

Once more, Guillermo cocked his eye down at the cocaine on the counter. He thought about how bad doing something like this at work was, and how his aches and

pains were almost gone. He handed the rolled dollar back to Chris. For now, Guillermo decided to pass on the euphoria.

“Let me know if you change your mind,” said Chris.

“I’m straight,” said Guillermo.

“What about you youngster?” Chris asked Tim.

“Yeah. Sure,” said Tim.

Chris prepared Tim a sample of the snow. Tim looked on as if he was getting ready for space flight.

“I’m going to the restroom,” said Guillermo.

The pair barely acknowledged Guillermo as he left them. He glanced over at the family in the store for the umpteenth time; then he checked the parking lot to see if any one else was coming in. Not yet.

He entered the restroom and went into a stall and sat on the commode. Sitting on the commode, he wondered if Chris was leading Tim astray. Tim was barely nineteen. When Tim first started working at the store, he told GQ he didn’t drink or even go out much at all. Lately, Guillermo had noticed Tim not only went out with them during the week and stayed up late drinking and partying - but was now drinking and partying here at work. Where was this headed? Tim was once an innocent and somewhat responsible young man. Now, Guillermo’s not so sure about Tim anymore. He hoped *he* wasn’t having a negative impact on Tim. He hoped *he* wasn’t leading him on to drink or party, or enabling him in any way, as if guiding him down some godless road to hell. Then again, Tim was of age, and he’s in a man’s world with his own responsibilities - if he wanted to get fired that’s his problem - Guillermo thought as left the stall. He washed his

hands and felt pretty good about himself for passing up on the blow. He strutted out of the restroom.

Guillermo was caught completely by surprise by what awaited him outside the restroom. He beheld Chris and a customer, *Chinito*, squared off on the showroom floor, as if both were ready to duke it out. They had their fists up looking ready to box in a main event fight, they even circled each other. Guillermo proceeded to the action trying figure out what happened in the short time he had gone into the restroom. He could make out that this was the same man with the family that had been in the store before he went into the restroom; no one else had come in yet. As he got closer, he could see Tim standing fearfully behind the counter and nowhere near the fray.

The man's family, not far from the action, also stared at the scene with fright. His wife held the youngest in her arms, while the older one attached himself to mommy's leg. Nearby, a toy was left discarded on the aisle floor.

Guillermo wanted to break this melee up, but before he could make it to the center of the brawl - fists were swung! They're throwing and throwing hard. Some of the punches were connecting. Guillermo, watching these guys fight, decided it wiser to wait a bit. What were these guys so mad about, Guillermo wondered? He had seen Chris fight several times before, usually at a bar or a party, and sometimes even Guillermo jumped in to help out with the odds, but never at work, and he wasn't about to jump in now.

Chris was the taller of the two and was mainly swinging hooks with his right arm – throwing an occasional left hook here and there - but that seemed to be his only salvation. Whereas *Chinito*, smaller in stature and reach, had brought his boxing toolkit; for every punch Chris landed, *Chinito* rallied on Chris with a hail of counterpunches to

the face and body. But Chris was no slouch and gave back almost as much as he took. The two angry contenders – of who knows what - traded blows in the middle of an open area (or arena) of the store. Guillermo despaired to intervene but didn't dare jump in just yet; once before he tried unsuccessfully to jump in between two brawling cousins – for his troubles he ended up with a black eye and a lump on the back of his head.

Finally, Guillermo managed to step in to stop this fracas and only after a flurry of punches from both fighters left them exhausted. “Okay, that’s enough, than enough,” he screamed at the two contenders! He looked at them and both appeared to have had enough: *Chinito’s* left eye had swollen closed; Chris had a bloody nose and nursed his right side, complementing his already blackened eye.

Chinito’s wife came over to her husband; she said something to him and motioned for them to leave – now! *Chinito* nodded to her in agreement and pointed to their car for her to go. She left the store obediently with the kids in tow. *Chinito* glanced menacingly at Chris and made a chest tapping gesture with his open hand (a similar gesture done by the *camera thief* as seen in the movie *FULL METAL JACKET*), and said, “I am Chinese dragon.”

“Get out of here,” responded Chris and lunged towards *Chinito* but was prevented by Guillermo’s grasp on him. And Tim, who surprisingly grew balls, jumped in and also held onto Chris. Chris, realizing he’s not going anywhere said, “Okay, I’m fine, I’m fine. It’s done.”

“You sure you all right?” asked Guillermo.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” said Chris.

Guillermo regarded him with some apprehension then said, “All right then, go wash up. We’ll figure this out.”

“Let me get my stuff. It’s on the counter,” said Chris.

“Go ahead,” said Guillermo.

Chris let out a long breath; then walked to the counter. Guillermo and Tim eyed each other, as if to say: I don’t know what the hell just happened but thank goodness this is over. Guillermo thought this just might be the craziest thing he has ever witnessed at the store. Tim wondered if this kind of shit happened a lot. And Chris was so mad he kicked the toy that was lying on the floor; he turned to see if *Chinito* had left the parking lot and was surprised he hadn’t. *Chinito* was standing outside - urinating on the parking lot near the store’s entrance.

“You motherfucker!” said Chris.

“Puck you,” said *Chinito*.

“Fuck you,” said Chris.

“Puck you,” said *Chinito*.

“Fuck you,” said Chris.

“Puck you,” said *Chinito*.

“No, its fuck you,” said Chris.

“Puck you, and I shit on you,” said *Chinito*.

“No. This is my country and I say its fuck you,” said Chris.

“I shit on you,” said *Chinito*.

“And I’m going to end this guy,” Chris said to Guillermo.

“Come outside. I give you something special for you,” said *Chinito*.

“Chris, stop. We can still hide this,” said Guillermo.

“This little fucker wants a war? I’m going to give him one,” said Chris.

“Chris, be the bigger man and walk away from this,” said Guillermo.

“Come outside round-eye,” said *Chinito*.

“GQ, are you hearing this little yellow bastard?!” Chris said to Guillermo.

“Chris, drop it. What’s its going to cost - a little pride? Suck up a little pride and keep your job,” Guillermo said to Chris.

Chris chewed on this for a moment. “Okay, I’ll drop it. Let me get my stuff,” Chris said to Guillermo.

Guillermo and Tim anxiously watched Chris grab his stuff from the counter area and entered the men’s restroom. Both of them then stole a look outside and watched *Chinito* light a cigarette.

“Can you believe these guys?” said Tim.

“Not really,” said Guillermo.

At this moment, a car pulled up, a couple got out and strode into the store. A second car pulled up and a family of three got out, and they went into the store. Finally, a family of six arrived in a minivan; they got out and entered the store. None of them paid any attention to the puddle of urine outside the store entrance; except for a small child who purposefully stepped on it and tracked wet footprints into the store.

Tim anxiously greeted the couple and shadowed them from a respectable distance.

Guillermo greeted the family of three. They told him they’re “just looking,” he watched them go over to a set of televisions. He then went to the restroom to check up on Chris - to see if he was ready to work with customers. Guillermo thought he might have

to change shirts; and hopefully, Chris won't have to go home because of the damage suffered during the fight, such as his busted nose and god knows what else. Guillermo arrived at the restroom and was about to knock when he noticed it was already open. He peeked inside; no one was in the restroom. Guillermo wondered if Chris managed to get out while he and Tim were distracted by the incoming customers - and left the store via the back entrance.

Guillermo decided not to chase Chris out the back way but instead went to the front entrance, just in time, to witness *Chinito* armed with a 2x4 (something he found in the parking lot or in the back of his car), and struck Chris's moving car. Chris, driving his car, backed it into *Chinito*, hitting him and knocking him down; Chris stopped, put the car in drive, and ran over the fallen *Chinito* and kept on going - fleeing the scene!

Guillermo watched it all in horror. He stood at the store's entrance, wanting to step out and save someone; but instead stood frozen with fear, even this was too much violence for him. He could see *Chinito* lying face down on the parking lot. His wailing wife got out of their car and staggered towards her prone husband; leaving the kids, who had seen everything, in the vehicle. He heard a woman scream behind him. He glared at the customers, all the customers, they had fixed looks on the fallen man; they appeared aghast, fearful, and confused.

The police arrived quickly. They covered the body with a white plastic tarp, taped off the area, and interviewed the witnesses; Guillermo, Tim, *Chinito's* wife, and many of the customers shared their version of the crime to detectives. Tim, who began to cry from the onset of the first question, answered that he wasn't sure what sparked the fight or who started it. He mentioned he was with customers near the back of the store and didn't hear

or see anything until he heard Chris say in a loud voice: “Not in my country, slope.” At which point, he said the scuffle ensued. To further hinder the investigation for authorities: Chris was killed by a California Highway Patrol task force. They were waiting for him on a freeway in San Diego near the border; he apparently was making his escape into Mexico. Law enforcement officers said Chris refused to obey police orders and instead pointed a gun at the task force - he died at the scene - struck multiple times by police gun fire. The authorities said it appeared to be suicide by cop.

Guillermo and Tim closed the store early to what indeed, for them, was a very long day. Tim eventually got his wish; he was transferred out of sales and into the mailroom. Guillermo received three new sales reps to replace the ones he lost. But before the end of their day, an incredulous general sales manager showed up to hear the story. GQ lied to him and mentioned he had never seen Chris like this. Furthermore, he neglected to tell him and the police that anyone had done any alcohol or drugs on the premises. Guillermo realized they’ll be found on Chris’s autopsy but felt he’ll just have to claim ignorance.

The End