

Down on the Street

by Oliver Hunt

Faces shine- real low mind

By Tuesday I ditched my Bridgeport Bullets colors. By Thursday I knew I'd never wear them again.

We rumbled up to Lincoln Park on our Triumphs. Nice day, all that shit. A couple of kids handed us their Festival of Life pamphlets, with their snake dancing and guerilla theater workshops, with their scheduled open air lovemaking sessions. Some of the kids saw us laughing and slinked away from us. We didn't have to do much- with our short greaser hair, iron crosses, exposed biceps and hardened faces- our presence intimidated enough. By the middle of Sunday we'd all more or less separated, with some of us going to Grant Park. We'd go back and forth, criss-cross the action, trade notes.

A few weeks before the thing we met with Lt. Connell at his garage in Canaryville. Him and a suitman who said he was CIA. Fuck if we knew. Connell was a cop who'd put a few of us behind the wall, including our leadership. We weren't as hardcore an organization as the Outlaws, which made us more pliable, but we did our little bit of dirt, which put us on both the police and The Outlaws' radar. Our founding president, in on drug and weapon running charges, said prison relations with The Outlaws might be less than amicable. That's why we were meeting.

The protesters built this wall out of picnic tables and trash cans, like little kids building a fort. I about had to double over, cackling like a madman, but by then I saw it wasn't as simple as hippies against us or cops. There were SDS and McCarthy kids, some preachers, some older neighborhood types. By then I'd also noticed some of the girls rattling around the action. Some were pretty, some were dirty, some were dirty-pretty. Them, the Yippies and the hippies didn't all the way get along, but they all built that ridiculous barricade. I coulda tore it down with a single hard pull. Maybe I was supposed to, maybe something like that was my job. Connell and the

suit promised us five hundred apiece, legal immunity, reduced sentences, some protection for those of us inside, and a blinder eye to future mischief. We were getting paid to crack a few skulls. We'd be fools to turn it down. But when the first teargas can came over the wall I had to wonder what the fuck they needed us for.

The city isn't gonna permit them to march, Connell told us at the meet. Some of them saying they're gonna march anyway. Our stance is okay, let's see what happens. CIA said We're expecting a heightened media presence, so we need something of a non-uniform task force. Connell added Do a few things we're not able to, not while in uniform. CIA said We'll also need you to check in on occasion, weigh in on how organized some of these protest cells are. The meeting progressed, CIA left and Connell passed out cans of Old Style and said Let's drink on it, good as any contract.

The teargas didn't bother me so much, I'd faced it before. But something about it focused me, it was as clear as if I was watching a movie. The cops blew a fog of teargas into the park, then came marching through it in their gasmasks, all faceless and robotlike- a monster wall squeegeeing the kids out into the street. Out in the street the kids formed little guerilla gangs- setting trash can fires, stoning cop cars and then running. I figured the kids might as well go to war, they seemed cut out for it. I never got a chance to crack a single longhair's skull. I saw another greaser type- not one of us- lay a punch into some SDS kid, then get his own melon cracked by a copstick. I knew then we weren't really needed.

At the meeting Connell said Police and organizations like The Bullets weren't that different. He said Some of us got a job, some of us got a hobby. That's how he put it. He went on to say Yeah, you know, it's these kids. He swigged from his beer and said Now look, I know some of us have adjusted to civilian life better than some others, but when you got called you went over and you fought. You didn't bother with why, you just did it. If you lived, you earned the right. Connell was right. Some of the older guys were in WWII, I was in Korea. We weren't fans of the hippies, even the ones we dealt to. Especially the ones we dealt to. Didn't exactly make us fans of cops

either. I'd operated under the mindset of Fuck Nice for as far back as I could remember. As a Bullet, you didn't follow your heart, you sniffed out a few bucks and a good time.

I'd made my way downtown, to Grant Park, and saw some of hippie chicks batting eyes at the weekend warriors. I'm thinking fuck those guys like I think fuck anybody, because we went to war and those guys wormed a way out of it, and now they're gonna face off with kids who outright said they ain't going. Then there was the scene around the flagpole, with both cops and guardsmen in gasmasks, butting rifles at us. Then chaos wasn't confined to the night, by then the skull-cracking and teargas clouds were all done in broad daylight, in front of whoever was watching. In front of the Hilton with all the suits and politicians and reporters. I saw cops beating up journalists. So much for looking nice for the media. I'd already seen a couple of Bullets still wearing their colors, handcuffed and bleeding. They were gonna rot in a cell along with our leadership, alongside the protesters. By then a few cops took some swings at me, switching on the thing in me. I wasn't on anybody's side but mine before then. I can't account for what I did- or what I do- when the thing is switched on in me. But I did it and fell back into the crowd.

In the crowd and fog of teargas, a dirty-pretty hippie girl had a wet rag over her eyes and was swimming blindly towards me. I don't do shit for the sake of being nice, but the Bullets whole reason to be there was a punchline. We weren't gonna get paid. I figured I better find reward elsewhere.

