

Road Avenger Demo III

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Shelby Mugshot

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Blank

I.Blake and Dallas

Blake got his cooler and hurried to the door, he had promised to meet Dallas, a Metro Force officer and mutual friend of Hal's, at CiCi's bistro downtown and he was running late. Jax met him at the back door with her leash.

He smiled then shook his head, "Sorry girl, you gotta stay here and guard the house, okay?" She gave him a pitiful look, tail sagging, then slid down onto the floor. He patted her on the head, "Go on now, you're in my way, now scoot!"

He tried opening the door, but she wouldn't budge, "You're a doggy doorstep huh?" She thumped her tail. He forced the door open against eighty pounds of fur dripping with saliva, then hurried to the Mustang, and when he pulled the car out of the garage he could still hear her barks of protest.

CiCi's was an upscale Bistro located downtown.

When Blake entered the bar, it took a moment for his eyes to adjust.

The place had a touristy feel, the walls were dotted with photographs of famous rock bands and movie stars, and the immense bar ran the entire length of the room. Dallas was sitting at the end, nursing a beer, he was impossible to miss because he was top heavy, all muscle; he was wearing a black leather jacket, the silver studs flashed as he waved, "Hey, Mate, have a drink on me."

Blake sat on the stool next to him, "Thanks."

Dallas called the bartender over.

Blake observed the fresh sutures on his friend's head, "You don't look so hot."

Dallas grinned, "That's what they say, but I make up for it with my charm."

Blake ordered a Pepsi, then said, "You going back to Metro soon?"

Dallas's eyes narrowed, "Got to, got bills to pay, besides, Hal's about ready to make a move on SCUM, and when he does I want in on it, the son of a bitch that did this to me...I want to catch him, make him squeal like a pig."

"I hear ya'." Blake nodded, "Hal's practically beside himself over all this shit, works day and night."

Dallas's eyes hardened, "He as well?"

Blake nodded, "I haven't seen much of him lately, last time I talked to him he was exhausted, I'm worried about him, he's fried, burnt to a crisp from the stress, but who isn't?"

Dallas took a sip of his drink, "That'll do you, fresh fried brains on the Barbie eh?" He said, flashing his Aussie humor.

He laughed bitterly before continuing, "I thought about taking the law into my own hands, going after those bastards, believe me, I thought long and hard.

After the Doc stitched me up, I went downtown, started trolling, looking for them. It was strange, any other night, I woulda' seen at least one of them, but on that night, it was like the streets were deserted. Good thing too, or I'd be up on murder charges."

"What stopped you?"

"Sanity my friend..." Dallas sighed, "If we play "God" then we're just like S.C.U.M., too many people have forgotten that lesson, look at the mess we're in."

Blake looked grim, "You've known Hal for a long time, ever think he'd do anything stupid?"

Dallas hesitated a moment before replying, "No way Mate, he's as sound as steel."

Blake nodded, then forcing a sincerity he didn't feel he replied, "I'm sure you're right."

II. Hal

Hal was awakened by the sound of his alarm clock ringing, *Just a few more minutes* he thought. He hit the snooze button and then slept, chasing the dream he'd been having.

A short while later his delicious sleep was interrupted again, this time he threw the alarm clock across the room and when the ringing continued he realized it had been his phone.

He snatched up the receiver and in a fuzzy voice answered, "Hal Hopkins."

The line remained quiet, except for the sound of papers shuffling, then Gary's voice boomed, "Hal, been tryin' to get you all morning, your phone off?" Hal groaned, "No, but I wish it was."

Gary continued, "Ah shit, bad news, the ammo we snatched from SCUM is gone, they took it away, stole it right out from underneath our noses."

Hal was now fully awake and gripping the phone so tightly that his fist had turned red, "I'm coming in, and I want everything the department has on what happened, times, who was doing security, the works."

He slammed the receiver down and then headed towards the door, grabbing articles of clothing as he went. He jumped into his Chevy, took a drink of warm Pepsi, and said, "Fuckin' SCUM, fuckin' SCUM, he continued repeating the mantra as he drove to the Metro Force building.

When he got to the station he pulled the Chevy into the lot and then slammed the car into his parking space with the tires screeching.

He was pissed, and heads would roll if he had any say in the matter, the fact of the matter was, he'd decided to go straight to the Chief's office. He'd piss down the Chief's throat, if that was what it took to get his attention.

He slammed his fist on the dashboard, and then hurried inside to continue what was sure to be a shitty day.

He ran into his partner Gary outside the Chief's office.

"Whoa, slow down, I got the info you wanted," Gary said, grabbing him by the shoulders, "How bout we take a look?"

Hal pulled from Gary's grasp, "Not now, I got business with the Chief."

Gary shook his head, "Why don't you come with me, then we'll go talk to the Chief if you want?"

Hal grew agitated, "I guess you didn't hear me."

"Look, you go in there like this, they'll take your badge."

Hal threw his hands into the air, and sputtered, "Maybe, but I've busted my ass on this case, and I'll be damned if I'll look the other way because of some incompetent fool."

"I know, but it won't do any good to piss him off, he's no more than a talking head, everyone knows you're the heart of Metro Force, we can't afford to lose you, not like this."

Hal opened the Chief's door, rattling the hinges, and stepped inside.

Chief Marks looked up without flinching, his face bland, and said, "Can I help you?"

Hal paced around the small office with his fists stuffed tightly in his pockets, and then bent over the Chief's desk. Commanding attention, he spat, "What the fuck happened?"

The Chief shrugged his shoulders, and with a calm that Hal found infuriating replied, "We're investigating, the guys from Internal Affairs have been here since early morning. Don't worry, we'll find out what happened." Hal punched the desk, "Don't worry? Is that all you have to say? I left my department under your watch for one night, and look where it got me. I've been busting my balls for months, and in a day's time you've managed to undo six months of investigations," Hal leaned within inches of the Chief's face, "You botched the job like a bad abortion, you fucking idiot, and you've got my departments blood on your hands," he slammed his fist down again, this time only inches from the Chief's over-ripe belly.

Marks didn't flinch, instead he laid an official looking document on the desk, carefully smoothing its edges, and then with a slight tremor in his hand, he placed a pen next to it. In a voice as dry as dust he said, "I want your resignation."

Hal shook his head, "You're a fool," he stared at the document for several beats, then picked up the pen, and remembered signing his life away on his first mortgage, thinking how life changing events often hinged on something as simple yet monumental as signing on the dotted line.

He glanced at the smug expression on the Chief's face, the satisfaction of victory rested there, but it was a fool's victory. He put the pen down without signing, then left the room without uttering a single word.

III. Billy Jack, Mel, and Hank

It was late afternoon when the three tanker trucks entered the California desert, it rolled on and on, its parched throat glittering in the sun. They'd crossed the state line running behind schedule, and were headed towards a perilous stretch of highway called "Gasoline Alley" deep in the desert.

Billy Jack drove the tanker in the center lane, his two friends, Mel and Hank, traveled in the lanes by his side, they'd picked up their cargo at an oil refinery near Chicago, and were carrying 27,000 gallons of gasoline between them on the return trip to Los Angeles.

The light had begun to dwindle when they came to the first wrecked tanker. The side of the road was charred, littered with steel, and the cacti that marched away from its edge lay shriveled and dying.

Billy Jack leaned closer to the semi truck's windshield as the shadows ate up the desert floor, wishing he'd stopped, wishing he'd waited until daylight to cover the miles of interstate that cut through the wastelands they'd dubbed gasoline alley.

He checked in with his friends on the CB, "Country Boy...Slider...how you boys doin?" Hank aka Country Boy replied, "So far so good, I reckon, *SCUM* bunnies must be takin' a nap." Mel grunted, "Don't count on it." They were busy watching the road for signs of trouble. Since they were finely tuned to each other they didn't talk much.

Billy Jack drove faster, slamming down the miles like a drunk slams down drinks, and the further he got the more apparent it became that he should have waited for daylight. Wrecked tankers littered the roadside, they rose from the shadows, skeletal, one after another. After he'd covered several miles he stopped counting, he got spooked. If he panicked he'd end up just like those rigs... a casualty of the gasoline wars and *SCUM*.

The desert had shed its dazzling skin and lay waiting in darkness. He thought of home, of sitting beneath the warm lamp light with his wife, Clara by his side. He accelerated until the truck shook, then pulled back, the speedometer hovering at 90 mph. His headlights flickered along the roadway, the interstate beyond disappearing into blackness. He got on the CB, "Breaker one nine, Slider, Country Boy, snap to it, we're running blind." Slider called, "Copy that," followed by Country Boy, "Copy, over n out." There was a multi-car

wreck up ahead that he didn't like the looks of, he leaned closer to the windshield, trying to get a better view, but it didn't help much. The wind was throwing sand into the air, blowing sandy runnels across the roadway. He could hear the grains ticking against the windshield.

Billy Jack eased off the gas, he made out two cars and a truck, they were rolled up together with the truck on top, it made him think of opening a can of sardines, of rolling the top up with the little key provided. It was odd the way they were twisted together and he wondered what kind of devilry had been afoot when it happened.

Trucking was his way of life, most people came home from jobs to start a totally different part of their day, but it wasn't like that for Billy Jack. He wanted to get a better look at the crash site, partly because he was curious, but mostly because his intuition told him too, because what he learned could save his life.

The air above the wreck was shimmering, he braced himself and considered the possibility that there might be someone trapped inside, but that was a ridiculous notion, wasn't it? When he passed the crash he got the feeling he was being watched. He chuckled softly, his nerves were on edge, for now the only demons out there were the sand devils stirring in the wind.

They hadn't seen any vehicles coming or going for a long while, the interstate seemed deserted, except for the steel graves that lined its shoulder. Billy Jack figured no one else was crazy enough to venture into the alley at night, no one except him and the two truckers traveling by his side.

A short while later when he saw light on the horizon he thought the glow was coming from a small town at the far end of gasoline alley, but the mile markers said different, the town of Dry Gulch was still 50 miles distant. He peered into the darkness, and realized the glow was a pair of headlights.

He felt foolish, his eyes had been tricked by the sand devils and his desire to be somewhere, anywhere, but here, driving along the interstate in this god forsaken desert. He watched the vehicle's progression, its high beams cut across all three lanes of the highway and then winked out. He was reaching for the CB mic when the car's tail lights flashed from the westbound lanes ahead.

The car was on the same side of the interstate as he was, which meant that it had been going the wrong way on the road when he'd first seen it.

He felt a goose walk over his grave, the driver of the car was either in trouble, lost, or drunk, maybe even all three, and he felt certain it meant trouble.

He keyed the CB mic, "Slider, Country Boy, you see that car up ahead?" Slider grunted, "Yep, looks like it's on the shoulder, you thinkin' what I'm thinking?"

Before Billy Jack could answer Country Boy said, "Reckon we better be careful, course, could be that it's one of them women drivers", he chuckled, "if that's so, ain't no hope." Slider grunted agreement, and Billy Jack said, "Could be bait, so it don't matter who it is, we ain't stopping, over-n-out."

A few minutes later Billy Jack got a glimpse of the car and it wasn't at all what he'd expected. It was a late model Audi station wagon and its engine was running. The driver side and rear passenger doors were wide open. *Maybe they stopped to take a leak.*

From his vantage point in the tanker Billy Jack was able to see all the way down to the car's floorboards. The back seat was cluttered with candy wrappers and toys, and there was an open map on the front seat, a woman's purse rested next to it, but that was all, the passengers were gone. *But why?*

He couldn't answer that question anymore than he could understand why a woman with kids was out here in the first place, it didn't make sense.

The interstate that cut through this part of the desert had *SCUM* tattooed all over it, it didn't take a rocket scientist to see that, and most travelers had enough sense to turn back once they'd seen the devastation that surrounded the interstate.

It wasn't just the wrecked tankers that told the story, it was in the pitted concrete of the road and the blackened shoulders that lined it, in the blast holes on the desert floor, and it was in the land itself, it had a watchful quality that Billy Jack didn't like.

As he headed away from the Audi, he glanced in his rearview mirror, there was a something on the pavement in front of the car, it looked like *a child?*

No, it was a child's stuffed animal, *Wasn't it?*

Billy Jack keyed the CB, "Breaker one nine, Country Boy, Slider, you see anyone back there?"

Slider answered, "Nope."

Country Boy added, "Nada, nobody, flippin' dippin' weird, you know....like them pilots disappearing in the Bermuda Triangle."

Slider grunted, and Billy Jack said, "Best keep your eyes open, over 'n' out."

People could be mighty stupid, he'd seen some sorry sights while traveling the interstates, had been in some back water towns where the people didn't have enough sense to come in out of the rain, and most of the time it didn't bother him, but this time he couldn't rid his mind of the idea that there were children back there....and they might be wandering around in the desert, lost and afraid.

He started humming 'Camptown Races' to get his mind off of the Audi....do dah, do dah...and that got him thinking about the 9,000 gallons of gasoline he was carrying, the head of the stainless-steel tank wasn't far from where he was sitting, it was like a loaded gun pressing against his back, and should he mishap and wreck, it would be the same as pulling the trigger. He wasn't a religious man, but was starting to think it might not be a bad idea if he and Clara started going to church more often.

The wind had picked up, he could feel it pressing against the side of the tanker, and the sand it'd stirred into the air made for poor visibility.

His view of the road was obscured by a shimmering wave of suspended sand, the grains sparkled in his headlights, crawling above the darkness, as if there were ghosts gathering up on the road ahead.

He was letting his imagination get the best of him, being ridiculous, the darkness held all sorts of possibilities, and ghosts were the least of his worries.

He tried to relax his shoulders, a cold beer sure would taste good about now.

A moment later when he spotted someone up ahead in the road he forgot all about the beer, he'd gotten a glimpse of the figure in his headlights, but that was all, it had disappeared into the dark along the side of the road.

It wasn't sand devils playing in the shadows this time, oh no, it had been too substantial for that.

Maybe it was the woman from the Audi, maybe she needed help, had run out into the road to flag them down, but had gotten spooked, except he didn't believe that, not really.

The other side of the interstate shown with the headlights of oncoming vehicles, a moment later they flashed from the steel graves in the road's median then disappeared into the shadows.

Billy Jack braced himself, calling over the CB to Slider and Country Boy, "Outlaws, look out."

It was *SCUM*, and he thought, *Shit, they've found us.*

Slider and Country Boy pulled their rigs in closer to Billy Jack so that they were running little more than a foot apart.

A black Cadillac swerved in front of Billy Jack's tanker, crowding him, trying to slow him down. He leaned over the wheel, his nerves jagged like glass, refusing to slow, he'd run the bastards down if he had too, they were fucking with the wrong man.

The air filled with the whine of approaching motorcycles and Slider called, "Watch out, we got a slew of bikers and a couple of rigs coming to the back door."

Billy Jack watched the black Cadillac veer off of the road and into the desert, he leaned forward and wished for night vision. The caddy's taillights flashed, and then disappeared all together, and he thought, *something's coming, something bad.*

He could see the outlaws in his rearview mirror, they were practically up his ass and pressing in closer.

The road in the path of his headlights was clear, but beyond that it was hard to tell. He had the impression that shadows were moving in the darkness ahead, his instincts told him so.

A bright flash of light followed, and for a moment he couldn't see, the flash had been razor bright, was it a flair, a signal?

Something's coming, something bad, and on the tail end of his thought was the sound of the outlaws revving their engines, they were making a move.

He pushed the gas pedal down, glancing in the rearview mirror. The space between the truck's bumper and the outlaws had widened, but only a little. He pulled his attention from the mirror and back to the road.

Shit. The interstate in the distance was a glowing ribbon of fire. The flames were getting closer, and as they bloomed along the pavement they lit up the roadside and the shadows beyond, the desert was crawling with outlaws.

Billy Jack had no intention of losing his cargo to the renegades. He drove with a precision that up until now he hadn't thought possible. He could see the glow of L.A. on the horizon, and thought, just a few more miles.

Up ahead, the road cut between a cluster of giant stones, stacked like dominos, and as he shot through hijackers boiled from the shadows like beetles. *shit, "Mayday..."* Billy Jack shouted over the CB. An explosion ricocheted along the desert floor and the road ahead lit up in a glowing rage of flames.

Truckers near and far heard Billy Jack's Mayday and they responded, sending out distress signals that spread along the airwaves like ripples in a pond, but none of them were close by. For now Billy Jack and his friends were on their own.

As he drove he watched the nightmare unfold, flames bloomed along the pavement, lighting up the roadside and the shadows beyond, transforming the desert into an alien landscape that was crawling with outlaws. The way was blocked.

He and his friends had nowhere to go.

They were trapped.

IV. Hal

Hal got behind the wheel of his Chevy, and began his nightly ritual. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, repeating the exercise until most of the tension had drained from his body and he felt relaxed. He'd started doing the ritual because of an incident he'd had while driving home from work the week before. Sleep had been on his mind when he'd left work for the day, he hadn't been getting enough of it, I'll lie down when I get home, take a short nap, he thought, except he knew better, if he did sleep it'd end up being for hours and there wasn't time for that. He'd hurried to his car but had to go back to his office because he'd forgotten the Chevy's keys.

He'd fought to keep his eyes open as he drove through the tangled network of highways towards home. The exit he had to take was a narrow ramp shaped like the letter C that soared into the sky and perched there, a super highway on stilts, and taking that ramp always freaked him out a little. He had been thinking about what a prick the Chief was, and his jaws ached from clenching his teeth.

It had been hard for him to concentrate and when he took the exit he felt apprehensive, so that by the time he had driven halfway up 'the ramp from hell', he was in a panic. He had traveled 60 mph around the tight curve like a bobsled in the Olympics, feeling like the car was going to slide out from underneath him as it drifted towards the concrete barrier, and for a split second he'd thought about stomping the gas and letting go of the steering wheel, letting the Chevy hit the barrier, *maybe it would go over the side*, and he'd free fall to his death a full 200 feet below.

At the last second he had jerked the steering wheel back towards the center of the ramp to avoid crashing. *Fucking job.*
The stress was eating him alive.

He rooted through the glove box, past a fifth of whiskey, a mint tin, and several worn tapes until he found his favorite driving tape, it was a collection of blues and jazz music that his friend Blake had made for him. There was a knock at the window, his partner Gary leaned in, "A trucker just called in, said there was a hijacking going down in Gasoline Alley." Hal sighed, "And?"
"I turned to the Citizens Band radio and it lit up like a Christmas tree, scuttlebutt is that a tanker rig put out an SOS call, looks like SCUM is at it again, thought you might want to check it out."
Hal nodded towards the passenger door, "Got any idea who it is?" Gary hopped in, "Rumors are flying on the airwaves, and one handle keeps popping up, "Big Top", ain't that Billy Jack's call sign?"
Hal gunned the Chevy's engine and shot out of the parking lot, "Shit, we better hurry."

V. Billy Jack, Hank, and Mel

Billy Jack took little comfort from the revolving red lights of the police cars in the distance, their way was barred by fire.

The flames were getting closer, and he was painfully aware of his cargo, there was a raging river of gasoline sloshing along behind him, enough to fuel an average car for 10 years.

He glanced at the photo he kept of his wife on the visor then grabbed the C.B. and called to his friends. The trucks opened like a zipper, veering into the soft sand along the highway.

Billy Jack's rig struggled a couple hundred feet forward and then got stuck.

He eased the truck forward and then switched to reverse, rocking back and forth, the tires sinking deeper into the sand. He was stuck, but that was okay for now, he'd made it off the road, and that was something.

He grabbed the CB mic, hoping that Mel and Hank had fared better, and called out, "Mayday, 49, niner, Mel and Hank, you copy?"

The sound of motorcycle engines intruded, he could see them circling through the haze of smoke and sand. They tightened the circle, hemming him in, but the remainder of his message was lost. One of the SCUM members had ripped the radio antennae from the rig, the sound of breaking glass followed, and a huge fist came through the driver's side window.

The air in front of his face stirred and a blinding flash of pain rocketed through his head, after that he knew no more.

At a truck stop, less than 15 miles away, rigs of every size and shape were gathering to do battle, and as Billy Jack had fought to free his rig from the sand, they had pulled onto the road behind him, fifteen strong, their calls echoing all along the airwaves as they drove, and more truckers joined them.

Soon the road behind Billy Jack and his friends would be filled with angry truckers, their rigs screaming along the highway in steel ribbon a mile long.

VI. Hal and Gary

Hal and Gary sped down the highway at a satisfying 85 mph, drinking up each mile in a matter of seconds towards Billy Jack and his friends.

Some miles distant the devilish fire glowed, announcing the showdown between good and evil.

Flames had parted the night, bathing the road with artificial light.

Hal jammed the accelerator to the floor and the Chevy shot forward, "God damn hijackers..." Hal shook his head, "Billy Jack's up there." *shit*.

Gary peered out the back window, dozens of headlights blazed, a large caravan of truckers had fanned out behind them.

Hal flipped on the radio, the resonant voices of truckers filled the interior, "Breaker one nine, truckers in trouble ahead, 2 miles and closing."

Hal switched the channel, "Could be trouble." Gary volunteered, "Those truckers are pissed, and if they get to the outlaws first, it won't be pretty."

Hal nodded, "My business isn't with them but with S.C.U.M., let the cards fall where they may."

When they were less than a mile from the scene a resounding boom shook the desert and a giant fireball rose high into the air. "Holy Shit," Gary yelled as Hal slammed the car into reverse and gunned the engine. The temperature skyrocketed and the Chevy groaned with the blast's compression wave. Debris rained down, and as Hal fought to turn the car around a huge piece of twisted metal fell from the air, landing inches from their front bumper. Black smoke rolled along the ground, and Hal felt like he was suffocating, his throat was burning and he had to struggle to breathe.

A few moments later they saw the first casualties of the explosion, as SCUM members straggled away from the scene.

One of them was driving an old truck, its black paint faded to the color of a chalk board; its grill was covered by a nasty row of spikes and Hal watched with satisfaction as a patrol car chased after it.

He and Gary had the front line, the other officers would see to S.C.U.M., at least for now.

Flames rolled across the pavement so they had to retreat to a safer distance. They got out of the car and waited.

SCUM members emerged from the flames, appearing as if from a mirage, coughing, their faces black with smoke. Hal pointed a shot gun at the men, waving them towards a patrol car. One of the men had a handle bar mustache, and Hal thought of days long gone, of cowboys and Indians battling in the desert sun. The one that looked like a cowboy waved his hands in the air and cried, "Don't shoot." Hal nodded and called out to another officer, "Come tend to these assholes." A fresh round of sirens cut into the air with the arrival of firetrucks, they drove neatly along the shoulder, stopping a couple hundred feet from the blaze. Gary peered through the smoke, "You think any of those guys are alive?" "Don't know." Hal shrugged, "That was a hell of a blast, and the rest could go any minute." The firefighters sprayed foam onto the fire, "Stay back, we gotta' get the flames out or the other tankers are liable to blow." Hal and Gary watched the foam billow across the road. As the flames quieted, the dark folded down around them and they waited.

VII. Billy Jack, Mel, and Hank

When Billy Jack came too, it was like he'd entered the gates of hell, for surely, this was what hell would be like -- Flames leached into the air, burning up the oxygen, making it difficult to breathe -- The smoke burned his eyes and made it impossible to see. He wiped his face and his hand came away bloody; he remembered that someone had punched him, and they'd punched him pretty damn hard too, if he recalled correctly. He looked around, there was no sign of the outlaws, he figured they'd run off to their dens in the desert, had probably gone underground to get ready for another day. The sirens had stopped and he could hear people talking and shouting as he eased down from the cab. He landed, dizzy and light headed, steadying himself on the side of the cab before heading towards the voices. He heard Mel calling his name, *good, Mel's okay* - The shadows grew longer as the fire guttered lower, making it more difficult to see, not that he could see much through the smoke anyway. A figure appeared from the smoke as if from a war zone. He stopped cold, heart hammering in his chest, *hell, this is a war* - "Billy, that you?" The figure asked, "It's Hank, you alright?" "Yeah, come on, we gotta' find Mel."

Hal and Gary leaned against the Chevy, waiting for the fire chief to give them the go ahead when two men stumbled out from the smoke. They were both covered with soot. One of them had a large gash on his head; his face was slick with blood, "Bout time you showed up, S.C.U.M. had a barbeque, we was' almost the main course." Hal smiled, recognizing Billy Jacks voice, "You sure do have a way of showing up when trouble's near, you okay?" Billy Jack shrugged, "I look okay okay to you? We gotta' find Mel, he's on the other side of the interstate, I heard him calling." Hal nodded, "Let's go get him then."

One of the paramedics patted Billy on the shoulder, "Come on, gotta' get you patched up." Billy shrugged his hand off, "Fuck no, I gotta' get Mel first." then as an afterthought said, "But I'll take some aspirin if that's alright." They headed across the highway, disappearing into the smoke.

From miles all around the truckers had watched and waited while the fire trucks put out the flames. They were hard working family men with no love for SCUM-- Many of them had lost cargo or close friends because of the dangerous cities and roads that SCUM had partially taken over. They peered into the night, watching as the outlaws spilled out of the hellish flames and billowing smoke.

Officers of the law would capture most of the renegades, but the ones that got through would meet another fate.

A grim looking trucker called over the C.B., "Four SCUM members heading north on the shoulder, I repeat, SCUM members on cycles."

The truckers nearest the cycles revved their engines, one of them took off down the shoulder, eating up the roadway, and when he reached the bikers he would eat them up just the same.