

### Outlaw Exits – Escaping the Machine.

**Brent DeBoer** never meant to turn road agent, I swear. I knew that man better than anybody alive, and he had a heart bigger than the motherlode at Tombstone. But it's hard on a man, coming up the way he did, all hardscrabble and hand-to-mouth from just about the time he could walk. He wasn't no more than a boy, really, when he worked his first round-up over in Lincoln county, but he came back a man, and I should know, I seen enough to know the difference. That round-up put dollars in his pocket for the first time in his life, and more than that, it got him a reputation around the other cowhands. I don't know what he did in those weeks exactly, but there was a new Colt on his hip at the end of it and something different in his face, and when he took his shirt off that night upstairs at Meg's Place there was a scar went right across his chest like lightning in a Wyoming sky. I didn't see a lot of him after that – he was on cattle drives and working the ranches all across the territory. But I heard the stories just like everyone else, and I didn't want to believe them, but I could see why they might be true. He'd come see me sometimes, when he had the money for it. He never went with any of the other girls, at least not the ones in Meg's Place, and he'd always treat me real nice, so no matter what stories they told, I knew there was that little part of him hadn't changed. But then, when the range war came, he went with the Regulators, and that turned his heart just about black. I could feel it in him, one time he sneaked a visit, it was like range wire strung tight through every muscle in his body. Anyhow, after the army came to Lincoln in the summer and the Regulators scattered, Brent got out with the Mexicans and I thought I'd never see him again. But he sneaked back one last time to see me in the Autumn. Garrett and his murderers were still chasing Billy McCarty and Tom O'Folliard and some of the others, but I think they'd forgotten about Brent. That made it easier for him, and so did the storm there was that night, beating rain like Noah's own flood and lightning like that scar on his chest. He had this wild look in his eyes the whole time, and he was talking strange, wouldn't tell me what his plans were, just kept saying over and over that he'd "found some people" and he was "headed for the pines".

He rode out after midnight and that was the last time I ever set eyes on him. Some say as how the U.S. Marshall killed him all the way up in Multnomah county the following year, but no-one I knew ever saw the body, and I did not believe that tale.

*Brent DeBoer – taken by the Autumn Carnival October 14<sup>th</sup> 1879*

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**Zia McCabe** walked into my life about the same time my luck was walking out. That's the way it always seemed, anyhow, and that's about the way I told it to the Feds when they finally showed up asking. They'd been on her tail a solid six months by then, sniffing along a jagged little line of stick ups and bank jobs Dillinger would have been proud to call his own, if he hadn't been shot dead the summer before. So I told them what I knew – this Zia dame blows into my office late one autumn afternoon, stands there in the stripes of low sunlight coming through the blinds, five eight in flat heel boots and a raincoat with the collar turned up. She had a deflated-looking carpet bag in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other, and she said she needed to find "a friend" down in the Tenderloin. I looked in her face, into eyes like holes in target practice paper, I looked at the way she stood, and then at the smoke coming off that coffin nail, and it wasn't too hard to figure a .32 in that hand instead. I didn't buy the line about a friend, no-one out of diapers would have. But these days I just do what they pay me to do, and she paid in rubber-band-wrapped cash, half my fee up front and no quibbles or batted eyelashes to drive down the price, right out of the bottom of that carpet bag. Looked to me like she was down to the last couple of bundles too. So I took the job. I shook down some known faces, kicked in a couple of doors and told her what I found behind them. Not long after that, her friend turned up behind a name you've probably heard. It was in all the papers for a while. They found him lying face down in a drain over on Russian hill, plugged three times in the chest and once in the back of the head. Whoever did it was making sure, and it was a .38 Smith that did the damage, which I guess goes to show you can't always trust first impressions. Anyhow, the night before all that made the Chronicle's front page, Zia shows up in my office again and asks me to pour her a shot in a voice that misses steady by less than an inch. She knocks the liquor right back and wipes her mouth like she's trying to clean something off. Then she pays me the balance out of that same carpet bag, which, I got to say, is suddenly looking a lot fatter than it did. When I offer her another pour, she tells me I'm sweet, but she's heading up to Portland, got to meet some people there. And she walks away.

They tell me the feds found her car parked up on a forest track off route 99, just over the state line into Oregon, but she wasn't in it. And nor was that carpet bag."

*Zia McCabe - taken by the Autumn Carnival September 7<sup>th</sup> 1935*

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**Courtney Taylor-Taylor?** Oh hell, yeah, I remember him. Came from money, they say, some trust fund clan up north, but that first night I met him, at this big Redondo beach cook-out, he just looked like another fucking beach bum. Pair of baggies hanging down past the crack in his ass, this bleached out T-shirt with, like, something French written on it, and just one sandal. There was some story about what happened to the other one, everybody was busted up laughing about it. Everyone in Redondo had stories that year, but mostly they were about getting busted by the cops, for possession or protesting the war or like that. I remember that Taylor-Taylor cat listening to one of those hippie sad luck tales and when it was done, he just smiled and toked hard and said – in, like, that tight, hold-the-smoke-down voice – *trick is, you don't want to get busted...* And then he lets the smoke up, lets it out like a sigh and says, quiet and all husked up, like his voice was smoke too *you gotta see the heat coming right around the curve of the world*. And I remember his eyes kind of glittered in the firelight when he said it, and – I mean, it was a warm night, man – I could feel like this chill at the back of my neck. Or maybe it was just the weed, coz that was some wicked shit we were hitting that night. Anyhow, I asked around about Taylor-Taylor the next couple of days, and it was weird. See, everyone *knew* him, but when you got right down to *what* they knew, well, there wasn't a whole lot. Word was he had a gig running that weed down from the Anderson valley in some hot-rod Mustang that Spider Ed Murdoch tore down and re-built for him. The weed was his trademark, everyone talked it up, though the story went he could get you pretty much anything else you wanted if the price was right. Had some big name customers too - I heard he knew Morrison, Richards, the Dead, the Airplane, like that. And next time I run into him, sure enough, it's up in the Hollywood hills at some big shot movie producer's party, out by the pool. He looks at me funny too, like he's maybe heard I was asking about him. But he hands me the joint he's got and it's that Anderson valley primo again. He asks me if I ever wonder if there's more than one of us, and when I laugh, faking more stoned than I am, and say thar there's two of us right here, he shakes his head, like, irritated, and says more than one *version* of us, man. *Like you could go back or forward or...something*. Then he's quiet for a while, just smoking, so I ask him about the weed like I'm supposed to, and he gives me this weird smile and drops a ton of information on me about how he's gotta do this big run Sunday. I thought it was weird at the time, I mean, it was like he was speaking for the microphone or something, like he just *knew*. When I tell him to save me some, maybe I can unload it for him around Redondo, he just gives me this sad look and he says *it's all gonna go bad, man. Couple of years more at most*. And before I can ask him what the fuck *that* means, he walks away, through the pool light and into the dark in the garden.

Well, the rest you know, right? The big run that never was. They watched for that Mustang all Sunday and into the week, but it never showed. Got some eye witness put it near Klamath Monday night, but that was never, like you guys say, *substantiated*, right? Thought I saw him backstage at Altamont in '69, but he was turned away, talking to one of the Angels and...nah, couldn't have been. Couldn't be. He was long gone by then. Long gone. You could sort of feel it.

*Courtney Taylor-Taylor – taken by the Autumn Carnival September 28<sup>th</sup> 1967*

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What I am about to tell you is classified at national security level, so you'd better turn that thing off. **Pete Holmström** shows up exactly seven times in the records for Operation Sundevil, no mention even remotely useful for prosecution, and there's a reason for that. Guy's a fucking ghost. You hear about him, but he's never there. Even the archive photos we have of him, it's like he's always on the edge of the group, always turning away, or his face is in shadow. We *think* he was part of the team that knocked over the NSA database in '87, but there's no evidence, and he walked. We *think* he helped take down First National in Chicago the following year, but if he did, we never traced his share of the haul. A lot of the hackers we offered immunity to after Sundevil talked Holmström up, like he was some kind of guru, but there was nothing we could use. And when local PD kicked down his door in Portland on some probable cause we cooked up, he was gone, baby gone. Rental apartment, bare walls, mattress on the floor next to a power socket. The only stuff in there that didn't belong to the

landlady was a couple of trashy sci-fi novels by some guy I've never heard of, a bunch of papers with sketched schematics and equations on them that no-one in the team can decipher, and this fist-sized chunk of concrete someone was using for a paperweight. Turns out it's a piece of the Berlin Wall. Oh, yeah, and he left a smiley sticker on the front door for us – neighbour says it definitely wasn't there the day before. That was early '91. We all figured he'd lit out for Canada on a fake ID – end of story. Then, one day that autumn, I'm on my way down the coast to a security consultants' conference in Oakland and I stop for gas just outside Davis. It's a beautiful day, sunlight bouncing off the windshield and glinting on the paintwork, I get back in behind the wheel and he's sitting there. Face in shadow. Had this cap over his eyes and a lumberjack shirt covering the Glock he was holding on me. He tells me to turn around and head north, back the way I came. Which I do. We drive in total silence for about an hour before I tell him I'm surprised to see him, we all thought he'd crossed a border somewhere. And he just looks at me oddly and says he has. That's all. Goes back to staring out of the windshield at the road. We drive all afternoon like that, he barely says a word the whole time, it's like he has to keep reminding himself I'm really there. I ask how he found me, have to ask him three times before he notices I spoke, and then he just says something about I'm some kind of test he has to pass. I tried talking him into giving himself up, he just shrugged. *Enforcement's a busted paradigm*, he said. *There's too much space, too many alternatives. You people have your fist wrapped around a grenade with the pin pulled. Isn't going to matter how hard you squeeze.* It was getting dark by then, we were over the state line and well into Oregon, and suddenly, middle of nowhere he tells me to pull over. No town, no houses, just forest and night sky. He grins and thanks me for the ride, slams the door and he's gone, off into the trees.

It's been ten years now, and nothing, no trace. Like the forest swallowed him.

Only thing is....I sometimes think maybe I saw a glow he was heading towards, like from a camp-fire in the trees or something, and I'd swear I heard calliope music too. But, hey, I was tired from that fucking drive, stressed out of my box, he had that Glock on me the whole time. Gotta figure it's just something I imagined.

*Pete Holmström – taken by the Autumn Carnival October 21<sup>st</sup> 1991*