

A Specialty Service

My Life Behind the Gun

Tanking Jobs

I was on a beach with nothing to do. Sara and the kids were on the mainland seeing a friend of Sara's from her past life. A few years after Sara escaped her death sentence back in Afghanistan her friend's husband was killed for working with the US Army as an interpreter and guide. They also made a play for the wife, but the government stepped in, and she was granted refugee status and allowed to come to the U.S. with her three children. Her first call was to Sara, but that didn't go so well. Something about Sara marrying a Jew just didn't seem right to her, but that was then, and this is now. She had called a few days ago and asked if she could see Sara. Now, despite what you may have read I am not a fool. One of my best friends and a once again business partner named Tima Cocks, but everyone calls her TC went with them. In fact, she flew them over in her new plane. With nothing to do or no place that needed me, I went to the beach.

As I sat there, a girl walked up to me in a Girl Scout uniform asking if I wanted to buy a box of cookies. About twenty feet from her was a woman who was also in a uniform with a large wagon piled high with cookie boxes. I asked, "*how much for the whole wagon load?*" Her gasp was audible as was her smile. She asked if she could get back with an answer. I almost wanted to hire her. I loved that response. She came back with the amount of four-hundred dollars. I said, "*I'll give you eight-hundred if you agree to give a box to everyone on the beach until the boxes run out.*" As we spoke her mother slowly walked up and said, "deal." The girl asked which box I wanted. I said, "*I don't eat girl scout cookies.*" The mother gave me this confused look then asked, "*why?*" I said, "*I owned a security company that worked for them once and let's just say things didn't end well.*"

Why is it that adults that work in child-centric businesses end up acting like children? Back in 2010, my company was hired to watch over a group of girls as they went door-to-door taking orders for cookies. Yes, they hired mercenaries to guard their children. At first, the parents thought their children were just exaggerating about the amount of pushback and outright bullying their daughters were getting from adults until one of them was caught on a video. It was a grown woman knocking over an eight-year-old girl and taking her order sheet. All the while the woman's own daughter watched and laughed. What did Simon and Garfunkel sing, "teach your children well." The video ended when the woman pulled a gun and pointed it at the person

with the phone recording the event. Can anyone say mother of the year? The police said they would do what they could, but that just didn't ease the tension with the parents. After some talk about ending sales, a member of this group spoke up and told them about us. Had I known some of the particulars about the story we might not have taken the job. For one the woman on the video was bipolar and was off her medication. The scouts both girl and boy are life-affirming organizations made to help children grow up with a sense of purpose and a drive for success, and some parents would do anything to make sure their child is number one.

The first day we just drove around as the girls went door-to-door. As they did, we could see other girls in scout uniforms watch us. Something felt off about this whole thing. More than once one of the girls talking to a girl outside of her troop pointed to us, and the other girls would just run away. On the second day, I radioed TC and said, "*you know I think we just became the muscle for these girls as they force themselves into another troops territory.*" TC didn't answer back at first. A good five minutes went by until she said, "*shit.*" Then she asked, "*what should we do?*" I said, "*we finish tonight then in the morning we call the Girl Scout organization and let them know what is happening.*" In superhero movies, there is always talk of this escalation of force, but Connery in the Untouchables said it best when he gave his speech about the Chicago way. One group brought mercenaries so what did the other group of Girl Scouts bring?

The answer to that was Bikers. Their jackets said, "Hell's Jockeys." It was as absurd as it sounded. Most of them were middle-aged men with guts that were bigger than the gas tanks on their expensive machines. I would find out that they were doctors, dentists and a few random businessmen who were more cosplay than gangster. I turned to an employee named Ted and asked, "*is this really happening?*" That was when the first cookie hit the windshield. I'm not sure if it was from one of the girls or the biker dentists. Just thinking about that made me think about that scene in Little Shop of Horrors with Steve Martin as a leather-jacketed dentist. I do know that it was a thin mint because when it broke apart on the windshield, we could see it was all chocolate cookie inside. We got out of our cars, and you could see the egos on the dental biker gang deflate. They were men in their forties and fifties armed with baseball bats and chains while we were well armed mercenaries with mace and tasers. We left the real guns locked in the back. I

swear one of them took a dump in his pants when he saw TC with the beanbag riot gun. It wasn't even a police issue, it was more like a gun used to launch tee-shirts than quiet riots.

It should have ended there, but a weird chain of events started a free for all that ended in arrests. The two groups came close to the leader with the gang saying how this was all just a misunderstanding as a girl dressed in a scout uniform yelled, "*we aren't paying you to talk. Kill them.*" I looked him in the eyes and said, "*kids.*" He laughed then all heck broke loose. From what we could tell a cookie hit Ted in the glasses causing him to squeeze the trigger of his taser which struck a biker in the leg and groin. The bikers that didn't see the cookie hit Ted thought that we struck first, and they moved in. TC stood by the car, and bean bagged anyone from the other side that came close to the car while I tried to stop the fighting. Off in the distance, the two groups of girls had left and were talking. While the adults tried to beat each other, the girls came to an understanding, and they divided the territory equally. Both the dental biker gang and my company were charged with disturbing the peace and fighting in public, and that is why we won't work for the Girl Scouts again.

I left the beach and went to a hardware store. I wanted to hang a picture in my office, but I needed a kit so it would hang correctly. I hate going to such stores. They remind me of one of the stupidest things I ever did. Back when we first started the company, we wanted to make sure that the right kind of clients could find us. We also wanted it to be easy. A website was developed made to look like a barbeque catering service. We shared the site with an actual catering company so that when people really wanted ribs, they could order, but then they wanted some ribs broken then that could also be ordered. To order a job with us a person needed a code that couldn't be hacked or guessed. With the code, a rack of ribs with all the sides was, in reality, a cry for help with an abduction. Without the code, it was a nice meal.

An employee named Bobby had just talked us into hiring his brother Jimmy. He was a likable guy who was just a little full of himself with no cause. On his first day while in the car on the way to a shooting range he let off a round that deafened everyone in the suburban punching a

hole in the roof. I was trying to find a way to fire him without losing Bobby when an order came in. The manager ordered a banquet for three hundred. The three hundred was a reference to the movie and comic book about the battle of Thermopylae where the Spartans fought the Persians. As a former Springfield Spartan, I had a soft spot for lost causes. It was unusual to see a store in the States request help with an invasion, but I didn't want to hesitate.

We geared up and went to the store. The parking lot was nearly empty, but it was early. After some talk, we decided to leave a van to watch for trouble as we planned our attack. Back then we had this van that we bought used so it could blend into whatever situation was necessary. One week it was a paint-van the next it was a plumber's mobile office. We even had a fake police tire lock made so people wouldn't think twice about why the van was parked there so long. This time Ted and the new guy Jimmy manned the van. This went on for a week with nothing. As they grew bored with the watching, Jimmy started to play with the flashbangs. He would toss one between his hands going higher and higher. He later told me that on the last toss the ring caught his finger and pulled the pin. He tried to toss the grenade out of the van, but the window was rolled up, and it bounced into the back with Ted. The grenade went off and the van filled with smoke and noise. The two got out just as the old carpet in the van caught fire and soon it was a raging inferno.

I remember asking Jimmy if he understood just what surveillance meant as the fire department put the van fire out. That van fire saved the company. We had our plan of attack in place and were ready to pounce when I met the manager who ordered the meal. As it turned out he was just ordering a meal. A cookout that would celebrate the stores ten-year anniversary. An employee suggested he try a random series of letters trying to find a code that would give him a better deal on the meal. He somehow managed to find the right code for the wrong order. I showed him the truck with the breaching tools and guns. The man turned white than red. An ambulance was taking Ted away with hearing loss and a possible concussion. He would lose some hearing in his right ear and a total loss in the left ear. The van was a total loss and the insurance company didn't want to pay for the nearly one-hundred and fifty thousand dollars in surveillance gear in the back. The first check they sent was for two-hundred dollars. The blue

book value of the van. Jimmy nearly choked when he saw the actual bill for the damages including the fire department and the damage to the parking lot. I ended up eating the cost as well as the cost of a rushed barbeque for three-hundred people which turned into more like nine-hundred. I also decided to keep Jimmy around. He was the worst good luck charm we ever had.

On the way out of the hardware store, I saw Jimmy. He was the local sheriff well-liked among his constituents. When I first ended the company, he had taken an inheritance from his brother Bobby and opened this crazy idea of a chef's table catering service. It was crazy and successful. After a year he sold the company to a group of well-known chefs for nearly twenty-million dollars. When Sara and I moved to Hawaii, he followed us and ran for sheriff. With his election, we were able to set up shop easier with a friend in law enforcement. He saw me come out of the hardware store and asked, "*so another rack of ribs?*"

That night Sara was home with the girls. Trina was at the end of the terrible twos working on the tyrannical threes or something to that effect. The word of the year was "*no*," and she said it as often as possible. I just hope she remembers that word when she starts to date. Jenna adored her big sister and whenever Trina was in her heights of tyranny Jenna would join her in a chorus of "*no*." Sara said that the dinner didn't go well with her friend calling our children half breeds and filthy Jew mutts. The meeting ended with Sara coldcocking the woman then them leaving. She regretted taking the girls to meet her then she said, "*I don't want our third child to ever be exposed to that kind of crap.*" Wait a minute what?