

The car stopped and two identical young men got out. El Rey appeared surprised that she was not greeted by Donny. The brief exchange ended when one of the look-a-likes reached into the Lexus.

“This doesn’t look good. Grab on, Barry!”

Trabue sped them toward the bus stop. The distance to the coupe closed rapidly. Confrontation, not flight, was declared by a burst of rounds fired by the Apostle Paul.

Reeves ducked to the floorboards as Trabue hit the brakes and spun the car around. Reeves reached for his weapon, used his door as a shield, and prepared to return fire.

“Shit!” exclaimed Peter to his surprised brother. “These aren’t blanks! They are real fucking bullets! Grab the bitch! She’s our security now. Donny set us up!”

“Freeze!” shouted Reeves. “Don’t make a...”

Reeves’ command was interrupted by a second burst; this time from Peter. The cover fire caused Reeves to duck again and allowed Paul time to punch a screaming Ellysa and stuff her into the Lexus. Reeves took aim and fired.

Peter slammed his foot to the floor. The twins and their captive sped across the parking lot toward the exit route that Donny had been sure they would never need. It was the last action Peter Duralde would ever take. The shot by Reeves had found him.

At first Peter imagined the pinch in his neck was a bee sting or bug bite. It was more twinge than pain. However, he soon tasted blood and began to choke. Uncontrollably, he spewed a red fountain across the dash and then upon Ellysa and Paul. His look at them expressed bewilderment. He gurgled, coughed, and then slumped against the terrified girl.

Horried by the sight and smell of death, the blood-spattered El Rey frantically shoved at Peter's lifeless form. Her efforts caused his weight to further push the accelerator downward.

Shocked and enraged, Paul could only utter, "Uhhhh... Uhhhhh...Uhhhhh!" as the Lexus sped toward a group of parked cars. Anticipating a crash, he braced against the dash and clutched his weapon.

An excruciating crunch signaled the impact. Metal groaned, glass shattered, and El Rey screamed.

Paul stumbled as he exited the mangled vehicle. What he left behind was an ugly mess. His twin's corpse was compressed beneath the steering wheel. On the dash above, El Rey was draped forward through the broken windshield with half of her body lying on the hood. Her face had caught the full brunt of the impact after first dislodging the rear-view mirror. Remnants of the device dangled from her brow.

Blood ran everywhere.

After braking and spinning the car, Trabue exited and rolled to the rear for protection. Unarmed, he was forced to rely on Barry for protection. From his secure spot Trabue could survey the impact site.

Paul had rolled to the rear after stumbling out of the car and then quickly disappeared behind the wreck. El Rey was clearly visible, half on the dash and half across what remained of the hood. She was struggling to raise her head. A moan came from the mass of pulp and glass that had so recently been a beautiful face. She was barely audible, yet in her head she was screaming, "Gas, gas! Don't you smell the gas?"

It was then that the fuel ignited.

Trabue saw the first flicker of flame beneath her. He also heard her scream as the fire grew. Prompted by heat, she had found her

voice. Trabue yelled to Reeves, “Cover me!”

Trabue ran for the wreck. He kept low, hoping to keep beneath Paul’s view. When Trabue reached the Lexus, he grabbed across the growing flames and tugged at El Rey while trying to watch out for Paul. El Rey tried to help by kicking against the windshield’s broken frame. Heat surrounded them as Trabue caught the first whiffs of her singed hair.

“We’ll make it,” he yelled as El Rey slid off the hood into his arms. At the same time, Trabue caught sight of Paul taking aim.

“No you won’t!” Paul yelled.

Trabue heard both shots. The first was from his rear. It found Paul, causing his face to explode. Through flames and smoke Trabue watched his would-be killer crumple. *Barry is earning his pay today*, thought Trabue.

The second shot was fainter. It may have come from beyond the wreck, but Trabue could not be certain. Just as the sound of a third shot reached his ears the Lexus exploded.