

[4] *Extract from
a newly completed novel
by Jamie Collinson*

Eventually, Butcher tossed them a longer glance, and put down the knife he was using to chop up chicken breasts. He walked through to the living room, his face blank.

'What's up, ese?' he asked Vulture. Butcher's face was smooth and weirdly innocent, considering his twenty-five years and the things Vulture knew he'd done to get that name.

'I need to do something.'

'About your brother?'

'About my sister.'

Butcher frowned. 'I'm fucking sorry, homie,' he said. Vulture nodded, and looked at the floor.

'But the cops got Knight,' Butcher said. 'You know I'll fix him once he's inside, bro. Shit, even *he* gotta know he's dead meat now,' he smiled.

'I want to hit his brother, too.'

Butcher's frown reappeared. 'Jose? He ain't involved, bro.'

'I know. But it's what's right.'

The guy with the pigtail gave Vulture a hard look from the kitchen.

Butcher chuckled. 'Is that right, little homie? You decided that all by yourself, huh?'

Vulture looked him in permission.'

Butcher stared at him 'Come outside, bro.'

Vulture followed him where the smell of raw air. His legs felt brittle, walking, on not

Butcher unlocked the walked out onto a patio mesh fence.

'We having a barbecue,' Butcher said, gesturing at the space. 'You're invited.'

'Thanks,' Vulture nodded. He tried to hold Butcher's gaze, but his eyes kept flicking away, and he couldn't help it.

'All the homies are invited. I guess we need extra security though, you do this thing you're asking.'

Vulture nodded. 'I know it's a lot.'

'It is a lot,' Butcher nodded. 'What you think's gonna happen if I tell you yes?'



the eye. 'I'm asking for for a long moment.

through the kitchen, chicken was thick in the and he concentrated on stumbling. back door and they enclosed by a tall, steel-

'War.'

'Yeah bro. War, and whole shitload of mean motherfucking cops.'

Vulture nodded.

'...Where you planning to clean up, after?' Butcher asked. 'I don't want nothing left on no streets.'

Vulture tossed his head at the mountain range to the north, looming behind the city like green-cloaked sentinels.

'The Gabriels,' he said.

Butcher laughed, a carefree giggle. 'Fuck. I used to camp in those motherfuckers.'

'Me too,' Vulture said.

Butcher stared at him again, his eyes bright. 'Alright,' he said. 'Permission granted, homie. But there's a condition. I got something I need you to do for me. And that might be a lot, too.'

Vulture returned the stare, steadily now.

'Anything,' he said.

Photograph: *Scare Tree*, Jamie Collinson