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# BALLARD

## motor court



BY MIKE KILEY

3+ weeks ago,  
6:45 p.m.



A police cavalry unit: 20 black-visored riders sit atop 20 huge black horses. They hide behind a concrete wall. The horses snort white into the cold night air. The unit captain checks his watch; holds up two fingers to his riders.

Around the corner, two old homeless women: Gracie—gaunt, with pink skin and cotton-candy white hair—struggles with a burlap sack thrown over her shoulder; the other, Betty—black, tubby, with a more-salt-than-pepper afro—lugs a set of golf clubs.

“You OK, hon? You gon’ make it?” asks Betty.

Gracie: “I can make it. You got the hard part. Them clubs.”

“Alright, alright. Just askin, is all. You a trip, little Gracie!”

They’re walking toward a six-storey brick building. The building sits beneath a network of vaulted on- and off-ramps. Traffic on the ramps is stalled: rush-hour. Honking, fumes, angry faces through car windows. Trying to get to The Tower that rises over a mile into the sky above all these access ramps. Below, on the street, Gracie and Betty approach a set of massive double-doors marked HIGH VOLTAGE: the entrance to The Rabbi’s factory. One of the doors creaks open, from the inside ...

... revealing an abandoned power station: oil spots on the concrete floor; a dozen huge iron transformers behind chainmetal fencing. A rickety metal staircase crawls up a side wall to a balcony on the sixth floor; otherwise the building is open.

Herman, a massive tatted-up Latino in his 40s, clangs the door shut behind the two old ladies. Luisa, a Oaxacan in her 60s, takes the burlap sack from Gracie.

Betty: “Gracias, senora! Can you say gracias, Gracie?”

“I been bustin my ass all day long on the street. I don’t have to *gracias* anybody.”

Betty winks at Herman and Luisa, then puts her arm around Gracie in a mock headlock.

“You one trippy white lady, little Gracie!”

“Those for The Rabbi? From the detective?” asks Luisa, indicating the golf clubs on Betty’s shoulder.

“Yes, ma’am. Here you go!”

Outside, the captain gives his signal and the riders, instantly arrayed, move forward: terrible, swift, inexorable. Two men ahead of them on foot rip open the steel **HIGH VOLTAGE** doors and the horses race through the opening in a flash of shiny black hair and leather.

Joe The Rabbi hears the commotion below from his sixth floor lair. He races to the catwalk and peers below to see:

Two dozen black-visored riders stampeding through tents, makeshift cooking stations, card tables. clotheslines. They maneuver and weave between the fenced-off transformers. Screams of outrage; fright. The riders swing meter-long batons to dismantle anything in their paths. The horses wheel and snort; charge and rear-up.

The Rabbi yells but is not heard: “No! Not again! Please! Stop! Not Again!”

He is ancient but makes his way as quickly as he can down the rusty metal stairwell bolted on to the inner wall on the north side of the building. By the time he is halfway down his factory has been demolished, his people’s meager

possessions have been trampled, and the riders have vanished as quickly as they came. All that is left are the cries and whimpers of the men, women, and children who count on him for safety.

The Rabbi stops on the stairs. He looks up. Closes his eyes. “His voice. His spirit. His word. I will learn. I will make this right.”

Betty bleeds from a wound on her forehead; she’s been shielding Gracie. Gracie now dabs at her friend’s head with a rag. Looks up at The Rabbi on the stairwell and scowls.