

# MURDALAND ISSUE #2 PREVIEW PDF

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### **Roachkiller**

#### **R. Narvaez**

Roachkiller's heading to the subway, not two feet off the bus from Attica and minding my own, see what I'm saying. Wanting to leave that shit behind. But Joselito, he don't shut up. Boy talked the whole way down.

He said, "So, Roachkiller, bro. Anything you need, give me a call, bro. You got my number."

"Straight up," Roachkiller told him. "Roachkiller's got your number."

Two-faced, back-stabbing, cock-sucking motherfucker. You got to make friends in prison, a lot of times with people you don't want to know. But Roachkiller was free now. Joselito was bad on the inside and tied up with worse shit on the outside. Trouble puro. Roachkiller done did his ten-year bit. Roachkiller was not going back, not for no one.

"I owe you my life, bro. I owe you, bro," Joselito said and gave Roachkiller a big handshake and hug. "Forget about it."

"Let me give you a ride, bro," he said. "I got a ride outside." He pointed to a big-ass black truck parked at the curb. Bigger than my old cell.

"Nah, man. Roachkiller got places to go. Things to do." Joselito went to his big black truck and Roachkiller just strolled down to the A train. It was hot down them stairs, sticky sidewalk hot. Bet that truck had a sweet air conditioner.

Roachkiller got on the A, switched to the J at Fulton Street, and when we pulled over the Williamsburg Bridge, Roachkiller could look back and see the City, the Empire State Building way up, shiny and silver and shit, and then, crossing the East River, Brooklyn, Williamsburg, brown and gray and gray and brown boxes, not shiny for shit. But Roachkiller was home. Roachkiller was free. Roachkiller had nowhere to go but abuelita's. She was still in the same dump on South Second Street, a block from the expressway. You hear trucks night and day, and if you want to hang clothes on a line they get all fucking grimy from car fumes. She was in them same three rooms Roachkiller grew up in. This is the room we ate dinner and watched cartoons in. This is the room my bro gave me my first, second and third black eye. This is the room where mami died.

*Abuelita* must be like eighty. She got thick glasses, shaded and whatnot, which is good because she got one mean-as-hell-looking cataract. But that lady is a tiger and sharp as steel. She give Roachkiller a hug like Roachkiller never did nothing wrong, like Roachkiller came back from a week at camp. She started cooking right away. Roachkiller saw she was moving a little slower now, taking baby steps. But she didn't want no help, screamed if Roachkiller moved.

It was cool and dark in there. Roachkiller went to the window, to check outside. Old habit, see what I'm saying.

"*Cierra las cortinas*," abuelita said. She got this phobia, thinking somebody's going to shoot through the window. It's not funny because it happened once. So Roachkiller closed the curtains, walked away. "Adónde vas!?" "I got to wash my hands, Abuelita. I got prison dirt."

"*Dios te bendiga*. Go wash your hands!"

She fed me *chicharrones*, *arroz con gandules* and more platanos than an army of Dominicans could eat. After Roachkiller finished, Roachkiller knew he was about to fall asleep. So Roachkiller went to the couch, before *abuelita* yelled at Roachkiller to take the good bed.

It was a couple days later, after another one of *abuelita*'s giant meals, when Roachkiller was outside busting down with an ace. *Abuelita* didn't let Roachkiller smoke inside. I mean, Roachkiller killed him some seventeen guys, eye to eye sometimes, but *abuelita*, she just smacked that shit out of my face. So Roachkiller went out to the stoop.

It was hot as hell outside, lots of people out, walking up and down. The garbage cans smelled bad, but better than Attica. That's when the kid came up to me. He was carrying a bag.

"Roachkiller," he said.

Not just anyone calls Roachkiller Roachkiller. This kid was about to get his ass kicked.

"I'm sorry to bother you," he said.

"Whatchoo want?" "They said, they told me, well... I wanted to hire you."

"What the fuck?"

Roachkiller stared at him, not mean or nothing, just "What the fuck?" The kid looked like he was about to cry.

"My sister is in trouble," he said. "There's this bad man. Juan De La Cruz. He stays drunk on the stoop all the time. She's going out with him. She's smart, really. But he's going to bring her down."

Again, "What the fuck?"

"She was supposed to finish high school. But he stopped her. And she was going to join the army. But he made her quit. Now she keeps saying she's going to get a job, but she don't do nothing."

An old story. Same shit happened to my moms. People like that are like addicts. Can't save them for shit.

"Fuck."

Kid's eyes got all wet. "It's not just her. She steals money from my mother. She takes things. My mother can't take it. She's too old. I don't want mami to die."

"Damn, kid. Whatchoo want me to do about it?"

"The old men on the street, they said you would kill a man for almost nothing, that you would do it for a six pack." Then the kid held out the bag. Damn.

"Please," he said. "I don't have any money."

"Then how'd you get the beer, little man? And now I think of it – how'd you even get the beer? You're, like, fucking twelve?"

"I saved up. Then I got a man to buy it. I had to give him money to get himself a beer."

"Shit," Roachkiller said. "Get the fuck outta here, kid. Go home. Play video games."

"My sister –"

"Fuck your sister. Leave Roachkiller alone."

Boy look like he was going to cry again, then he turned around and started walking. But not before putting the bag with the six pack into the trash. Then he walked to the building across the way and went inside. Never looked back.

Roachkiller knows what you're thinking. But there was a time Roachkiller would have killed a man for a six pack. Even just one beer. If it was cold.

It was only a matter of time before Don Moncho came calling. Roachkiller had been looking for a bar, but all the old ones was closed. Too many dark places with rock music. Roachkiller found this old social club called

El Piterre on South Second. Woulda been nice to meet a mamita, you know what I'm saying. Good salsa music, some classics, on the jukebox. But nothing but old men in there. They wouldn't even let you smoke. Roachkiller was outside when this guy came up.

He said, "Let me get a cigarette."

Roachkiller gave him a bone.

"Let me get a light." Roachkiller got out his gold lighter. But then the motherfucker kicked Roachkiller hard in the shin, grabbed the lighter and ran.

"Motherfuck," Roachkiller said and started running after the guy.

But a building stopped Roachkiller. It was Quique, Don Moncho's man. He put his hand on Roachkiller's shoulder, and Roachkiller might as well have tried to move a mountain.

"Let him go," he said.

"You know that guy?"

"Juan De La Cruz. Steals little shit. A waste of your time."

"Don Moncho wants to see Roachkiller," Roachkiller said.

"Don Moncho wants to see you."

Back in the day, Don Moncho had his own club. He had a pool table in the back, and he played morning, noon, night. He coulda been a famous pool player if he wanted to. If he asked you to play, you had to, even though you knew he would beat you every time.

But there was no pool table this time. Quique brought Roachkiller to an apartment on Roebling, above a laundromat. Each time you took a step it got hotter and hotter. Quique opened the door and it was like a fucking steam bath.

Don Moncho was a great man in his day. But now he was on a couch, in sweatpants and a blanket. Little TV set on. Smelled like old piss in there. "Roberto," Don Moncho said. Roachkiller could barely hear him. We caught up, about the old days and shit. But Roachkiller doesn't want to waste his time or the time of a man like Don Moncho.

"Listen, Don Moncho, no disrespect, but before we get into what I think you want to get into, I got to say, Roachkiller ain't doing time again. Never."

"Fuck you," Don Moncho said. He was old but his balls still had hair. "I invited you here to give you something."

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**That's all of the story we can give you online.**

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