

Francois Ghebaly Gallery

JUNGLE DEAD IN SHOOTOUT! (*To Candice Lin*)

2009

By Marcus Civin

Center City. “Hands!” I reach into the white Cadillac and grab Jungle’s left hand. I twist three stickweed fingers off the steering wheel—face to face with Jungle, now pointing a .32 at my partner. My partner shoots Jungle once in the right thigh. I see flesh open...

Jungle’s eyes...

... under silky eyebrows. I notice the backs of my legs— more than usual—must be clumps of flaking dirt from the chase; my motorcycle slid through canyon mud.

Jungle’s wrinkled forehead.

Jungle gets my partner in the shoulder. Jungle exits the passenger side of the vehicle, gun in hand. Jungle: “My name is—”

My partner pushes Jungle to the dirt, just in front of the vehicle; Jungle rolls towards the edge of the cliff. Jungle back towards us, still holding the gun. I shoot Jungle once in the left thigh. I see flesh open. I shoot again. I keep shooting. Jungle sputters: “Celibacy... Clock, I will— You will live inside me for—”

*[I am not in the vehicle; I am not reaching inside myself. Not again. I have only parts of a body. I massage some skin with mud. Jungle strokes my hair.]*

A terrier sniffs at a cactus. The sun is coming up.

There’s a small crowd now, of neighborhood people—some in pajamas—and chanting: “So long as I have this mouth! So long as I have this mouth!”

The crowd wants to hold Jungle’s body. There will be trouble for us if the crowd gets larger. My partner radios for Back-up who cordon off the area with rusty fencing. The crowd presses, grabs the fence, shakes it. “So long as I have this mouth!”

I set the usual pyre. My left thigh is stiff; then, my right thigh. I hold Jungle’s limp body. I drop the body on the fire. My partner reclines in the white Cadillac, feet up on dash, scratches at a fresh shoulder bandage, and flips through a book of Jungle’s drawings.