Once upon a time, in a town that had been famous once upon a time, our story continues with a young man fresh out of vocational school. He had been in the U.S. Army for a few years before getting out. He had been a 91Alpha, then his MOS changed to a 91Bravo, but everyone knew him as “Doc”, their beloved medic. At the end of his service, he moved to Roswell, New Mexico where he could be closer to family and go to school. Well, go to school, he did. The young man attended classes during the day and worked at the local gas station at night. Using his G.I. Bill money to enroll in Emergency Pre-Hospital classes like Emergency Medical Technician, Basic and Intermediate, he soon excelled and knew he had found his calling in life.

The young man knew, as his family knew, that he was prone to just plain old, bad luck. But he was determined to be the best lifesaver he could be. With an extremely positive “Get it done” and Can do” attitude, he worked and studied tirelessly, striving to become the kind of heroes he saw on television growing up. Heroes like Gage and DeSoto from Emergency, Pierce and Hawkeye from MASH. These were his heroes, saving lives and keeping a sense of humor while trying to deal with the worst life throws at you.

This particular night, he and his brother found themselves on the road to work. His younger brother was going to drop him off at work and keep the truck they shared. The brother would be back in the morning to pick him up. They had done this, many times before. Tonight, should have been no different. Boy, were they wrong! This was Roswell, New Mexico. Known for it’s honorable university on one side of town and it’s prestigious military academy on the other. In-between the two lay the hidden lower class, the dregs of society, the goons, and ruffians who had nothing better to do than make trouble for everyone else. Their favorite motto at the time, “Smile Now, Cry Later”, was used as a greeting, a parting and as a way of life.

Pulling up in the middle parking stall, right in front of the huge glass windows, the brothers could see there were a few customers coming and going. As they both went in, they passed between two young, Hispanics, dressed in full cholo attire. These two vatos looked like they should be in the barrios of downtown Los Angeles and not here in the desert of the town known for crashed USOs and aliens from outer space. They were wearing bright and very crisp, oversized, white tee shirts, hanging down outside their pants, khaki pants with pleats, black, Nike Cortez shoes and their black hair greased back with hair nets. Here I must inform you that the two brothers are themselves, Hispanic. Yet they were raised on farms and in small towns. They wore blue jeans and combat boots, tee shirts and short, black hair. They most definitely did not look like cholos.

Passing through the two vatos, who were having a conversation, the older brother said, “Excuse me, gentlemen”, nodding his head in recognition. The younger brother, always the jokester, passes through and says, “What’s up, ese”? Lifting his chin as he spoke, he made some kind of outrageous gang signs using his hands and fingers, as cholos were known to do when first meeting other cholos. Then they were past and in the store. The younger brother went to get a free slushy, as was their routine. The older brother went to the register and spoke with the cashier to do their shift change and cash count. Looking up, the older brother noticed that the two cholos were still outside the front door speaking and gesturing towards the store.

This usually meant one thing, Beer Run! Where underage teens would grab a case or two of beer and run out without paying for it, This happened quite often, and for legal reasons, the store ‘s policy was to call the police right away. The next step is to prevent damage to the store and attempt to reduce the amount of lost merchandise. The store’s policy is to not physically apprehend the suspects unless they threaten to harm staff or customers. Store managers knew this and they also knew that if the employee was big enough and bold enough, they could stand in front of the suspect and demand the merchandise back. This interaction would usually lead to the suspect getting close enough to the employee in a threatening manner, thus allowing for the claim of “I feared for my life” scenario. At this point it would be considered legal to fight the suspected thief over some cases of beer.

I kept my eyes on the two suspects and noticed my brother had finished getting his free refill and was on his way out the door, again walking between the two. As he was making his way, he put the soda in the crook of his arm and made some kind of hilarious looking gang sign again at the two, using his two hands. It looked hilarious! Then, out of nowhere, the larger of the two cholos swung and hit the brother in the face! The younger brother fell back, dropping his slushy.

The older brother quickly jumped over the counter, instructing the other cashier to call the police. He ran towards the door and made his way between the two parties holding out his hands keeping everyone separated.

“What the hell’s going on”? The older brother asked loudly, his voice angry, looking towards his brother.

“These fools, hit me”, Exclaimed the younger brother. He was holding his face, and it was easy to tell a black eye was starting to show.

“Hey, fuck you, Foo”! The bigger vato shouted.

“Yea, Ese. Fuck you”! The other cholo chimed in. This was about to get ugly real quick, unless the situation could be de-escalated.

Knowing that his brother was a bonafide prankster, and had probably started it with a mocking gesture, He turned to his brother. “Ok, it’s over now. Get going on home”. The older brother admonished the younger. Turning to the two vatos, he said. “No problem, you guys just go, ok? We don’t want any trouble here”.

The younger brother made his way to the truck and mumbled under his breath, “But it wasn’t even my fault this time”. Looking dejected because his brother hadn’t stood up for him. The older brother noticed this and immediately felt bad about not standing up for his brother. But this needed to be over. Here in Roswell, late at night, there was nothing else to do, but cause hate and discontent. It was quite possible these two would be back with some iron and shoot up the store while innocent people were inside. The brother could not take that chance. If it meant he had to be the bad guy, so be it.

“Naw, Foo”. The smaller guy exclaimed to the older brother. Pointing his finger, “We’ll be back, ese”!

“Yea, Homie! You don’t know us, Aye”! The bigger cholo added, getting closer.

“Look, We don’t want any problems. Just go, ok”? The older brother pleaded. “Just go”.

As he was about to get into the truck, the younger brother paused with the door open. The two vatos were heading back to their car. The older brother took out a notebook and pen from his pocket and began taking notes.

They reached their car and opened the two back doors, The car was parked on the side of the building. Parked backed in, perfect for making a beer run and quick getaway. Inside the cherry red Monte Carlo, two females sat in the driver’s seat and passenger seat. They were probably the getaway drivers! You can’t make this stuff up. The girls had their hair up high and probably used a whole can of hair spray each. They had their eyebrows drawn up in high arches with black lipstick and wearing the white tank tops common to that era.

The two girls noticed the older brother following and yelled, “Hey! Foo! He’s writing down our plates, Aye”! One screamed over her shoulder.

The two cholos turned and came back to the older brother who was frantically writing down the plate number and putting the notebook and pen away to free up his hands, in case this went bad. As they approached, the bigger one screamed, “Hey, Fucker! What do you think you’re doing, Ese”? Then they were close and the larger one pushed the older brother using a two-handed push, as is common to most untrained fighters.

Holding up his hands in a defensive gesture, the older brother was calm, cool and collected. Unbeknownst to these two low-life, vato locos, the older brother had just gotten out of the Army. He had lots and lots of training in unarmed combat, knife defense and bayonet training. This included many hours, every month of the Army Combatives training program, level one and level two. In fact, the older brother had been the company’s instructor for Combatives Training!

The bigger cholo stood directly in front of the older brother and quickly tried to push with both hands again, this time, the older brother instantly brought up both hands in the middle and redirected the attacker’s hands to the outside, leaving the middle of the attacker completely open to a counter-attack. The counter-attack came in the form of a low abdominal kick straight to the solar plexus. The cholo never saw it coming. This caused the air to immediately leave the attacker’s lungs, doubling him over, knocking the breath out of him. Grabbing the cholo by his greasy hair and hair net, he lifted his face up so he wouldn’t drop to the ground. Immediately hauling back his fist, he had the foresight to look around at his surroundings to identify other potential threats. He noticed that the other vato was quickly closing the distance. Plenty of time for what he planned. He swung with a very deliberate blow, punching directly into the nose, feeling the cartilage of his nose snap and crackle as blood exploded downward in a messy spray. The eyes rolled back.

The other vato was almost on him and out of the corner of his eye, he saw his brother, diving through the air, like Superman! Tackling the cholo and going to the ground. Now, let me just let you in on a little secret here. The smaller brother was a scrapper himself. He had to be, if he wanted to hold his own and not be bullied by the bigger brother, as brothers were sometime prone to do. The older brother had taught the younger how to fight, tooth and nail, win at any cost. So, as the older brother saw them go down behind the Monte, he was not worried, he knew his brother could handle his own business. This allowed him to focus on punishing the vato in front of him.

Picking up the cholo and throwing him on the rear of the nice Monte, he could tell they dented the trunk. Then he continued to strike. Left hook to the vato’s right eye! Right hook to the vato’s left eye! Hammer fist to the stomach again. Hooks to the ribs! The car started up and began driving away! Still swinging hard, as the car drove away, the vato slid down the trunk and fell to the ground. Then looking around for his brother he saw them in the shadows. His brother on top, swinging for the fences!

“Hey”! yelled the older brother. The younger pausing with a fist in the air. “Let him go. He’s had enough”.

Looking down at his victim, the brother did as he was asked. Getting up, he went to stand by his brother and they watched the two vatos slowly gather themselves and stumble off towards their car waiting out in the street. They climbed in and sped off. Sirens could be heard coming down the street from the other direction.

When the police car pulled up, two officers were sitting inside. Rolling down their windows in the parking lot, they motioned for the two brothers to come over to them.

“Hey, Officer Rod”! The older brother exclaimed. “Thanks for coming”! The brother was beaming. Proud.

“Yea”? replied Officer Rod, good naturedly, “What are you two boys up to tonight”?

“Well”, Began the older brother. “Would you believe we just got jumped by some cholos”?

“Really”? Replied the passenger officer, identified as Officer Travis. “You expect us to believe someone jumped you two”? Laughing. “Yea, okay”.

“No, seriously”, Pleaded the younger brother. “We just got jumped”. Holding his face.

“Okay, okay. Which way did they go”? Asked Officer Rod, noticing the swelling that was starting.

We both pointed in the direction the car went. I pulled out my notes and gave them the license plate number with a description. Cherry red Monte Carlo with white walls. The officer’s eyes lit up and they smiled, in recognition. “I know those guys”, Stated Officer Rod. “We’ll be back shortly”. And they took off in the direction of the vatos.

A little while later, I had finished the shift change and cash count. My predecessor had gone home. My brother was finishing a new slushy refill and the police cruiser was back. The officers waved us out to their car. Getting out of their car, the officers pointed towards the two suspects in the back of their vehicle.

“Are these the two guys you say jumped you tonight”? Officer Rod asked in a professional manner, all business now.

Peering through the window glare I could easily make out the two vatos. It was them, alright. They sure looked beat up. Faces were swollen, eyes were blackening, noses bled down their chins and shirts. Dirty and torn shirts, hair messed up, sticking though their hair nets. They were a sight!

“Yes, Sir”! The younger brother piped in. “That’s them alright”!

“Well, do you want to press charges or anything”? Asked Officer Travis. “If not, we will have to let them go”.

“Oh no”! I exclaimed. “We definitely want to press charges”.

“Okay, good”. Said Officer Rod. “Come down to the station after your shift and we will file the police report”. Then he looked at me deliberately, “These guys, actually jumped you, huh”? I just shrugged my shoulders non-committedly.

“Well, we have to take them to the ER first”. Said officer Travis. “Need to get them medically cleared. These guys are beat to hell, broken noses, broken ribs, black eyes, it’s a wonder they can still sit up straight”. Officer Travis was shaking his head, a smile on his face. They drove off and we went back into the store.

“Want another refill before you head home”? I asked, turning to my brother.

“Heck yea”! He replied laughing. “And one of those chimichangas”!