What Happens When You Hang with the Homies

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The night starts like any other night. We're in Baldwin Park, a city just outside of Los Angeles, a city where young kids fill the parties. As we walk up to the house, we see a few teenagers, must have been around fifteen or sixteen, walking out of the party with a NOS tank (which they usually fill balloons with to sell to get high). I yell at them, “Yo homie, is it cracking?” he replied “Yeah!” “Then why you leaving?” I asked “Cuz they charging for the NOS.” Then I suddenly remember my shank in my back pocket, I stop in front of the house in the middle of the street and stuff my shank down my pants so if they check me, they won’t find it. As I walk in to this backyard party, security which consisted of two guys in oversized shirts and jeans began to search us. They didn't find anything on me, (they usually don’t). Just as we pass security my homie Gino, pulls me to the side, “Dude I was worried for a second, when he patted me down, he touched my shank” (which was latched to his belt loop on his pants). I just looked at him and said, “Don’t worry about it. They didn’t find it so it doesn’t matter.” As the night fades, my homies and I are chilling, some of us smoking, some of us drinking. However, we were soon out of beer and hookah, so a few of the homies go into the crowd to look for some more beer, then another one of the homies, Jose, starts picking up on some girls to hang out with us, and as time passes it's going good, relaxing enjoying life. Then suddenly, one of the girls that was hanging with us, comes over to me and yells, “Who gave me crack!” And I was like “No one”, “The black guy what did he give me?” I told her, “He gave you weed”. Then my friends come over and they say the same thing, so then we call my black friend Marcus over and he explains that he gave her weed, but the pipe she smoked it out of just looked like a crack pipe. Then soon after the party was over everyone was getting kicked out, but before that my homie Gino tells me to watch his back, “I got take a piss and you don’t want a shank in the back, you know.” I just look at him and laugh, “You’re right homie, I got your back.” He finished up and we walked outside, although to me it seemed shady because when we went outside there wasn't a cop in sight; therefore, I didn’t understand why we were getting kicked out. But, just as my homies and I walk to the car in the parking lot, we see a guy with a NOS tank filling up balloons, then we see a couple of cholos grab the tank and put it in the back of their homie's trunk. Then the guy who owned the tank started arguing with the short youngster who stole it. I started telling the homies to get in the truck, but they didn't listen. Next thing you know the little cholo punches the other guy and they start scrapping in the parking lot. After getting punched in the face, the guy who owns the NOS tank pulls out a shank leading one of the cholos to reach for his belt instigating the owner of the NOS tank to do something, but instead he just starts running and the two cholos start chasing him. Then I look at my homies and yell at them to get in the car, but Jose is so high and drunk he can't get in the truck, so I proceed on yelling, “Close the fucking door, close the fucking door!” Then I look up and I
see two guys each holding a barstool leg coming towards us, looking pissed as fuck. I yelled one more last time, “Close the fucking door!” But we didn't have time, so I punch the gas, and as I looked to the passenger side, I see my homie Brian holding on for dear life as he hangs out of the side of the car as I am trying to bob and weave cars, then all of a sudden we here a loud “BOP!” A gunshot goes off and we see people running away from the parking lot as we approach the main street, but as I begin to turn I see the car full of guys that had the barstool legs and the guns, so I stopped just as they make a U-turn and continue chasing their victim while I turn the opposite direction to get my homies out of harm’s way as I continue driving I pull into a CVS parking lot, all five of us hop out of the truck and check ourselves for bullet holes along with the truck. My homie, Gino just looks at me and shakes his head, “Dude we almost died! Fuck man, that was crazy.” As Brian hopped out the truck, he just stares at the CVS pharmacy and says simply “we need more beer”, but CVS is closed, so we get back in the car and drive to a seven-eleven. As some of the homies go get beer, Gino says, “I can’t believe they started shooting over a NOS tank, man people die over stupid shit.” I tell him, “I told you fool, people die over stupid shit all the time.” He just stares at me and shakes his head in acknowledgement.

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It was just another summer day on my way to work, waking up early just to take the train to aviation station. I always stand against the doors or the walls of the train. I never sit down in a seat because I can’t watch my back if I’m sitting. For those that take the train, you know that there are some shady and crazy people that ride it, so you may understand why I don’t trust the people around me. If you take a real good look at people and watch their body language, you can tell a lot about them. You can spot criminals or gang members or even sometimes undercover cops (If you don’t believe me just try it sometime). However, this day was a little different from the rest. I spot a guy on the train-he’s from prison. I can tell this almost immediately due to all of his tattoos. They’re done in poor quality, and he has a lot of them-too poor and too many for any rational person to want them for their entire life. The one that caught my eye the most was his barbwire tattoo that went around his entire neck. What also caught my eye was the fact that he had a shaved head and he was what looked like both Latino and White decent. I wasn’t sure if this guy was a Cholo or a Nazi Skinhead, I’ve heard of White Sureños from an uncle who went to prison, so maybe this guy was a White Sureño. As the train pulled into aviation station, we both got off, and I went down stairs to wait for the bus. I repeatedly saw this guy walking back and forth down the rows of buses, but it seemed to me that he was confused where he was going. He must have walked by about two or three times before he came to talk to me, I
assumed he chose to talk to me due to the fact that we were both similarly dressed in plain t-shirts and baggy jeans. He came over and asked, “Hey man do you know how to get to Manchester and Sepulveda?” I told him “Ya”, and explained which direction and bus to take. Then he asked for my name, so I told him I was “Chris”, but I soon found out that he didn’t want my real name, he wanted my nickname. I realized this when he replied with his name, which was “Evil from Vato Locos” which was a notorious gang from East L.A., as well as the same gang that the movie *Blood In, Blood Out* is based on. As he said this I noticed his evil grin, which was similar to my homie Rodrigo’s grin, and he’s a gang member too. Evil was so proud of being evil, it literally came out his eyes. I didn’t really want to ask why he got the name Evil, after all he could have said Hector, Jose, Juan, or he even could have made some shit up-I wouldn’t have known-but to start a conversation off with, Hi, my name is Evil from Vato Locos, makes you want to reconsider what you say next. So I asked him why he was going to Manchester and Sepulveda. He explained how he just got kicked out of his sister’s house and he was heading to his moms house to look for a job. Then he asked me where I worked, so I told him I worked at a college in West L.A. I didn’t say the name because after all I didn’t know this guy and you’re not given the name “Evil” for no good reason. However, I got to say after having a conversation with Evil, he wasn’t too bad of a guy from what I could tell.

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Brian, Gino and I are cruising in my neighborhood when we get the call, its Ray: “What’s up fool?” “Nothin, what’s up?” “Aye, come by my house we’ll drink my dad’s gone.” “Alright we’ll be there in ten minutes.” As we get to Ray’s house, Ray and the others start drinking. Then suddenly, Ray goes to his cabinet by his television and pulls out a huge silver plated bowie knife, and starts waving it around at us. I tell him, “Hey, homie put it down, you’ve been drinking and your gonna cut one of us.” He, being funny, gestures the knife towards my torso and then “Bam” stabs it into his kitchen table making a huge indentation within it. Then as my homies pick up the knife and pass it around the table to look at it and see its fine edge and chrome finish, we start talking and reminiscing about old times, making jokes, complaining about one another, and even talking about each other’s girlfriends. Then rapidly, Gino swiftly pulls out his shank from his pocket, just to compare the knives, therefore prompting me to pull my shank out and compare it as well, but just as I am viewing it, Ray Abruptly grabs my shank out of my hands and I respond by saying “When was the last time, I saw your girl fool?”, “What did you say fool?” Ray asked, “I said when was the last time, I saw your girl?” Ray angrily says “Fuck you” and points my shank at me. I look into his eyes “What you gonna do?” “What you wanna do fool?” Then unexpectedly,
Brian hops up and says, “no, no, wait, stop, stop”. Then I put my hand out towards Ray as a peaceful gesture and he grabs it and we both laugh and Ray tells Brian “I ain’t gonna hurt this fool, he’s like a brother to me”. Brian calms down and says, “Don’t scare me like that man”. After all the tension and laughter fainted, I was so tired, I went to go lay on the recliner. Just as I am about to pass out, Brain comes over and jumps on me and we both collapse to the floor, as I lay on the floor all crushed from Brian’s jump I look at him and say “What the fuck?” “My bad man, I didn’t know it was gonna do that.” “What the fuck did you think it was gonna do?” “I don’t know.” I was so hungry and tired that I didn’t care anymore and said “I’m going to Denny’s”. Next thing you know all four of us are in my car on our way to Dennys.

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It was Saturday March 15th, 2014 when I realized that loyalty was only skin deep. The day started out good. I went to my homie Ramon’s pad for a barbeque to celebrate his 21st birthday. All of his family was there, we started out drinking, hanging out talking to one another, but within a couple hours half of his family was drunk. I remember Marco, a homie from Baldwin Park calling over to me, “Aye, you wanna go blaze?” I told him “Naw homie I quit 3 months ago” “Serio?” “Ya fool.” But I went with him and Ramon’s brother, Rodrigo for the fuck of it. Right after they smoked, we went back to the barbeque, Rodrigo sat next to me, he looked so out of it, but he was the type of fool that would do crazy shit. So I looked at him and said, “Yo, homie I got some fireworks in my car.” “Serio?” he asked, “Ya.” “Go get them then!” I went out to the street and grabbed some bottle rockets out of my car and took them to Rodrigo and we set three of them off in the backyard. But I still had about ten bottle rockets left and Ramon brought about four m-80’s from the house along with some other miscellaneous fireworks that he had. Rodrigo grabbed the bottle rockets and rest of the fireworks and told us to come out to the alley. When we got in the alley we started to shoot each other with bottle rockets and then Rodrigo took the handful of fireworks and lit them one by one and threw them at us. Then just as he threw an m-80 at Marco I saw two cops come out from some apartments down the alley, so I yelled, “Cops are here!” Cece frantically asked, “What?” “Cops are here!” And I ran to Ramon’s backyard and into the house, making sure that the cops didn’t see me enter through the front door so that they couldn’t have any reasonable suspicion to search the house and find me along with my homie’s hidden rifle in the house. As I ran in the house, I hid in the hallway and just as I see lights flash into the window, I hear everyone, all the kids and the ladies in the house asking what’s going on?, “The cops came and I ran, but they got Marco, Rodrigo and Branden.” Ramon’s mother, Gia tears up in worry. Then suddenly, Ramon comes through
the door trying to calm everyone down with his half-drunk self. Just as I take off my shirt, Ramon says, “Those fucken cops knocked down my camera, they hit it with their stick, I’m pissed, fuck them.” Then Ramon went out to talk to the cops, but just as he reaches the gate to the alley, a cop pops up behind a fence and questions him: “Were you the one that ran?” “NO!” Ramon replies, then the officer in the alley starts yelling, “Get your ass inside, unless you want to join them.” Ramon returns moments later, as the rest of us sit and wait, all of us wondering what Rodrigo, Marco, and Branden had in their pockets. Rebecca says, “Rodrigo had weed, but he has a card.” Suzie says, “Marco had weed too, but he doesn’t have a card.” As we sit in anticipation, wondering whether or not they’re going to go to jail, the back door opens abruptly and it is all three of them, with huge smiles on their faces. “What happened?” we asked “Shiiiiitttt, I was talking all this shit to them.” Then Rodrigo glance down at me sitting and asks, “Why did you run?” “Cuz it was my instinct, I just reacted, you see cops you run!” He smirks and says “You know they asked me about the fireworks.” “What you tell em?” “I told em some white boy gave them to me.” I stare at Rodrigo in shock “Are you serious?” “Ya.” In that moment I felt betrayed, I couldn’t believe how a tatted down OG\(^1\) like Rodrigo could dry-snitch on me to cops. After all I am like family, and I realize that it was over something small like fireworks, but it is about the principle of what he did, I learned that day that loyalty was literally only skin deep, because after all in a barrio full of Latinos, I was the only light skinned one there and I know if the cops found me it wouldn’t take them a long time to make the connection.

\(^1\) OG, Original Gangster: a gangster with lots of knowledge and experience in gangster ways