

Next in line. This way to egress.

Shadows on the ground showed twelve noon. The duo had stacked half a meal ticket for just under half a day's work.

The Presidential motorcade seemed to be missing a few cars.

Jerrymander Mold pushed his way in front of an elderly woman and stepped on the hand of a child. Later in the week, headlines would reveal that the President had cut in line to the men's room at Radio City Music Hall. Geographical anachronism, but on balance, he would consider the coverage fair.

"I need a rock."

Thomas remained expressionless. Looked at him.

"I'll suck your dick!" pleaded the President.

"I imagine you would," said Thomas.

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"What I saw out there today made me reconsider the choices I've made in my life," mused Thomas, as he and Piro tore down the stage and loaded their gear into the RAGNAROK's cargo bay.

"What do you mean?"

"Just the pathetic nature of junkies. They'd make a poor army. Unfit for recruitment, they can't even pay their bills."

Piro and Thomas headed back down the ramp, folded up their card table. Both men considering the hard realities of their vocation.

"It's that last bit that raises concerns back at HQ. Luckily, these customers had foodstamps."

"I started that program," said the President, sitting barefoot on the curb.

Thomas tossed him a rock, gratis.

"Can I take a look at those shoes?"

Thomas walked over and bent down, demonstrating the original Reebok PUMP.

Watched Jerrymander examining his footwear. Felt guilty. Started clumsily unlacing his shoes.

"Here, why don't you take these, you look like you could use them more than I ever will. I don't even play basketball. To be honest, I have a closet full of them, back home. Hardly ever wear them. Reebok keeps sending them to me for free."

"Remarkable," said the President, querying his database for a method of converting athletic shoes into a crack pipe.

"I don't know, Piotr. I'm kind of tired of this shit."

"Don't lose heart," said Piro, squeezing his brother on the shoulder. "We're the best in our business, at the top of our game. We're really making a difference. Who can compete with us, even on their best day?"

Thomas pushed up his visor. Rubbed his eyes.

"I've been thinking about going solo."