

BOUNTY HUNTER

Hi! I'm Miguel Todd. They call me Sweeney. I'm a bounty hunter. This is my territory. Break the law and I'll kill you.

I'm licensed to prevent crime in the area between Lodi to Stockton, and from 99 to I-5. It isn't a great job by city standards, but in the Central Valley my guys live like kings. The same dough on the coast is peanuts, but we don't care about that. I've seen pictures of waves and they don't turn me on, at least not enough to want to battle my way over to view them live.

They say trains once rolled freely without constant protection, but I don't think so. You'd have to be retarded to believe such fairytales. Cities have their own armored law enforcement systems and corporations handle their own employee crimes. It's only in the booneys where freelance vigilantes, like my crew, can hold the rights to stretches of road and rails.

My expenses are huge. One full electric charge for my armored transports is over five thousand and each tire is twenty-two hundred. Ammo is fairly cheap because the gov doesn't want bounty hunters to go out of businesses, but a month of maintaining equipment is more than most pawns make in a lifetime. That's why I have to plan how I run my business. I've got to make a profit to afford the salaries of my employees.

The gov pays ten thousand per body for each speeder and each passenger. Plus, I keep their vehicle and anything on them. I haul in great extra dough selling used shit. Two of my boys can usually handle one car even if it's full of gang bangers. Everyone wants to buy used cars with battle scars. Driving one of those makes em' look like tough guys.

Jerks who try to dig up railroad tracks for scrap metal are worth fifteen thousand each. They always come in heavily armed groups with flatbed trucks, fork lifts, and the mistaken belief

that we won't be able to kill them. Their shit sells well at auctions.

Bagging taggers is my most profitable operation because they swoop down like a flock of birds thinking to leave nothing but a pile of shit when they fly away. It's easy to drop as many as thirty taggers at once and the overhead to pop them is lower than taking on assholes with artillery. Besides, with graffiti grease balls we generally don't have to use rockets or grenades. Body parts don't pay as much as whole stiffs with a few bullet holes.

Of course, my competition is fierce. Everyone wants to ambush us and take over my action. We have to be pretty sophisticated to survive.

A couple of weeks ago our scanners picked up texting about a raid taggers planned on a long siding we protect. Once a week SP uses that siding to drop off loaded flatbeds, containers, box cars, and tankers coming out of Frisco and on their way to Bakersfield or LA. That load is typically over a mile long and requires six engines to pull it south. The cars stand still on the tracks for only about fifteen minutes and taggers know exactly when they can spray them until they look like disgusting garbage.

Right on time, just like the text messages said, we watched through our night vision snap-on lenses as a flock of taggers, a gaggle of geeks, swarmed though a vineyard to get to that long line of railroad cars. Most of them were kids. Some were teenagers and should have known better. A crime is a crime and the penalty is death. Stupid shits. They just didn't appreciate my crew's need for bounty money.

Seven of the graffiti creeps carried enough bags of spray cans for forty marauders. Six others carried nine millimeter semi-auto rifles and backpacks of ammo. The no-talent artists started spraying the railroad cars, making them as ugly as their limited skills could, while the

armed guards kept vigil. They were easy targets. We outnumbered them three to one.

Taggers seem bent on making this the ugliest country in the world. The gov says it costs billions to try to erase their crap. No wonder the politicians finally embraced the federal bounty system. Killing the little bastards is cheaper than fixing all the things they try to deface or steal.

Taggers may be the dumbest of all criminals. I mean, they don't make any money for their efforts. What's their motive? Oh sure, a lot of it is gang related bragging, but they know they risk almost certain death, yet they still keep coming. Maybe they're retarded from eating all those Soylent Twinkies. Too bad they're mostly fat little fuckers who can't run very fast. That takes most of the fun out of blowing holes in them.

I let the painters really get into a festive mood while we videoed them at work. I have to provide visual proof they were taggers. Maybe it's the solvent in the spray cans that makes them slaphappy, maybe they're just meth babies born a few cells short of a functioning brain.

I devised our combat plan and placed my troops around to cover all possibilities, even an ambush by poachers. We spread out like a pack of wolves surrounding a reindeer. We left them no safe direction to escape and no clear targets to shoot back at. Fifteen seconds after we started, they were all dead.

We stripped anything of value off their bodies. It's easy to sell even blood drenched used clothes. We stacked the nude carcasses onto the bed of my Chevy two ton stake side flatbed and covered the pile with tarps for transport because some citizens get grossed out seeing so many slaughtered children. We're sensitive to those emotional sissies even though most folks are pleased to see that we're doing such a good job of making the world a better place.

The uniforms at the recycling station were having a busy night. There were seven bounty

hunter trucks ahead of mine. I used this slack time to spot the faces of hunters I knew and to check out new ones. Up ahead I spotted a guy I believed was a poacher. I told Jose, who was riding shotgun with me, to get out and tell the guys to follow that bastard to see where he went. I couldn't go because I had to wait my turn to collect for the gaggle of taggers we'd bagged.

The gov wants an orderly administration of justice. Poachers are criminals taking advantage of other men's lawful territories and hard work. I like killing thieves, poachers and gang bangers. They're harder to video in the act, so it makes bagging them a better challenge.

If you like adventure, I'm always looking for good employees. Give me a call.