

**Welcome to the Hive Guys Grill
(and have a nice day)**

A short short story about fast food in the underhive



Fass was busy busy busy, they'd had a brisk trade this lightson. The smell of ratburger was beginning to get to him now though - and the cheese, oh the cheese.... But this was the responsibility he'd been given. Not quite the task he was expecting when he turned up at the Blacksnakes hangout, another runt-juve looking to run with the big boys.

He was expecting to be sent to pick a fight with a rival juve, kill a milliasaur, or be put through some painful and/or humiliating initiation ritual. He didn't think he'd be in this greasy shack flipping ratburgers all day and being verbally abused by slagminers, but this was all part of Boss Shanker's Big Plan:

"Fass my lad, any damn fool can swing a stubber around, rob ash-poor scavviess and drink wildsnake all day. 'Time comes when a man and his gang has to look to the future, diversify like. You son are going to be the spearhead of the Blacksnakes legitty-matt commercial empire. Fighting with other gangs' got no future see - sooner or later you'll end up with a bolt in the gut, or hanging from the enforcers garrison. You stick with me and we'll be as rich as a Guilders mistress."

So this was Fass' lot, to be the Blacksnakes' fungus fryer and patty slapper. It wasn't so bad a job, he supposed - he was mostly warm and dry and hardly ever had guns pointed at him. Better than where he was before, living in a communal hole with the other street kids, fighting over scraps and breaking each others teeth.

It was rare for a juve - much less a greenhorn - to be given this much responsibility. So despite the drudgery of the task Fass was proud of his little job. He was pretty much left to his own devices, apart from once a week when Boss Shanker would come to collect the takings and look things over. He was out the back now, muttering to himself and counting the creds. He was taking a little longer than usual. He wrapped up yet another order and passed it through the small hole in the grill.

"There you go sir, have a nice day."

"Go boil your head you rat-headed little runt"

"Come again soon sir"

The customer staggered off into the darkness. Unsurprisingly, most Hive Guys customers were in some state of advanced inebriation.

"FAAAASS!"

The young juve flinched as Boss Shanker roared at him from the rear of the shop.

"Y-yes Boss?"

"Where is it?" Shanker seethed, stalking over to him rapidly.

"W-w-where's wh-Aaak!"

The Boss had Fass pinned to the wall by his throat, and their noses were practically touching. Fass faintly recalled a story about Shanker tearing off a Goliaths nose with his teeth, and then wished he hadn't.

"The week before last," Shanker hissed "this place took two hundred credits. Last week it was a hundred and sixty. This week it's one-fifty."

"Do you take me for a fool you grimy little scavver?" He screamed. Spittle flecked Fass' face.

"I told you what would happen if you dipped your fingers in the till...." Boss Shanker started to unsheath his knife.

"Nonononononoplease! Boss I'd never steal from you on the emperors bones I promise please please it's just been a bit slower than usual I'll work extra I swear I swear!"

Fass babbled away in a blind terrified panic. Shanker relaxed a little. The kid was too petrified to rob him. Something else was going on.

"Have you been gobbing in the burgers in front of the customers then? I've told you about that. Twice."

"N-no Boss. Not since that, er, those t-times."

"Then wha-"

The rear door opened, and Billy Cracks, Boss' right hand man, poked his head around

"Hey Boss, you need to come see this."

"Can't you see I'm BUSY?" Shanker gestured with the hand that wasn't pinning Fass up against the wall.

Billy grinned "You **really** want to see this boss."

Shanker released Fass and he dropped a foot to the floor.

"Come with me you little dirtbag, we're not done yet."

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They stood in front of the shack, watching a seemingly endless train of customers come and go.

"What does it say Billy?"

Billy Cracks, being the only member of the gang who could read, was considered something of a savant. Even if his lips did move when he did it.

"It says...ah....'Hive Grills'.....'Ac...Accept no sub....substitutes'...you want me to read the menu?"

"No Billy. No I do not."

Boss Shanker stood silent for a minute or two. Fass glanced at Billy behind his back, and he winked at the juve.

"Fass."

"Yes Boss?"

"Go shut up the grill, we won't be cooking any more burgers today."

"Boss?"

"Fass if I have to repeat myself again I will cut off your ears and wear them round my neck so you always hear what I tell you the first time."

"Yes Boss! Shutting the grill now boss! Do-"

"-And when you're done, go to the ganghouse, and tell the boys to get their arses down here on the double, with all their gear. On. The. Double. All their gear."

"Yes Boss!"

Fass scampered off, practically skipping. It looked like he was going to see some proper gang action after all.....

Billy smirked as Boss looked at him. Billy had been sceptical about the gangs move into actual business-type business, but had held his tongue. He knew it wouldn't last. "Not a word Billy, not a word."

He had wanted to do things above board, he really had. He'd had enough of the bloodshed and battles, and just wanted a little nest egg to look after him once he started getting grey and creaky - was that too much to ask? Just to make a living without having to stomp and shoot people into submission? And now this drokker was moving in on his business, practically taking the credits out of his own pocket. The dirty son of a sludge-farmers whore would rue the day he ever thought about competing with **his** investment.

Boss Shanker sighed. The world of legitimate commerce would just have to wait.....

