

# **Tweekers Don't Haggle**

**A short addition to The Ziti Saga**

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The sun beat down on San Diego turning the asphalt outside of The Flagship into a black griddle. It was late afternoon, the bar squatted on a cracked lot near the bay, its faded sign peeling. Gulls screeched overhead, circling a dumpster spilling fish guts and beer cans. Don Dee stood shirtless by a dented pickup, his gut hanging over sagging jeans. His brother Henry loomed beside him, a towering slab of biker muscle in a stained tank top. Jackie Russo leaned against the bar's stucco wall, her blonde hair pulled tight in a ponytail, a cigarette smoldering between her fingers. The heat pressed down, fraying tempers like old rope.

"You're fuckin' kidding me," Jackie said. She flicked ash into the dirt, her gaze cutting between the brothers. "Weed's what moves, you dumbasses! You're drowning us in coke and meth, and I got nothing green to push."

Don wiped his brow. "Weed's a hassle, Jackie. Takes too long, too much space. Coke's a quick snort, pay, and gone. Meth's even better. You see the lines at the beach? Tweekers don't haggle."

"Haggle?" Jackie snapped, stepping off the wall, flip flops kicking up dust. "I got guys begging for bud, Don. Surfers, hippies, the whole damn boardwalk crowd. They ain't snorting your crank. They want a joint and a wave. You're choking me out here."

Henry shifted, boots scuffing the ground. "We're hauling ass up and down the coast, risking our necks with the TJ boys. You think weed's worth that? Coke's ten times the profit, pound for pound."

Jackie laughed, a short, bitter bark. "Tell that to the stash I can't move. I got a beach house full of your snow and glass, and half my runners are tweaking out instead of selling. You're turning my crew into junkies."

Don's smirk faded, his face reddening. "Your crew's weak, that's on you. We deliver, lady. You don't like it, find some other mules."

Jackie's eyes flashed, and she jabbed her cigarette at him like a dart. "I'm not running a charity. Gene's gonna hear about this, and he ain't gonna be happy when I tell him you're screwing the pipeline."

Henry uncrossed his arms, stepping closer. "Don't pull Gene into this. We're keeping him flush with cash. You're the one whining 'cause you can't shift product."

Jackie tossed her cigarette, grinding it under her heel. "I'd shift it fine if you'd bring me what sells. Weed's gold down here, always has been. You're too busy chasing the big score to see it."

Don spat into the dirt, a wet splat near her foot. "Weed's for losers, Jackie. Grew out of that shit in '79. Coke's the game now and meth's the future. You're stuck in the past, running a dime-bag operation."

"Past?" Jackie's voice rose, cutting through the gull cries. "This ain't Haight-Ashbury, you prick. It's San Diego, '84. Weed's the backbone that keeps the small-timers loyal. You flood me with hard stuff, I lose 'em to the street. Then what? I'm stuck with a bunch of burned-out fiends and no cash flow."

Henry snorted. "Lose 'em? Sounds like you're soft, Jackie Russo. Can't handle the heat, get outta the kitchen, bitch."

Jackie's fists clenched, nails digging into her palms. "I've been holding this crew together while you two play Hell's Angels. You're the ones half-assin' it. Gene's gonna have your asses when he sees you."

Don laughed. "Gene? He's too busy babysitting Tommy to give a shit. We're the ones keeping this afloat. You're welcome, by the way."

Jackie took a step up, her nose inches from Don's sweaty chest. "You're welcome when you bring me ten pounds of green instead of another kilo of that jittery crap. I got buyers waiting, and you're jerking me around."

Henry's hand twitched, hovering near his belt, but he stayed still. "Watch your tone, Jackie. We ain't your errand boys. You want weed, grow it yourself."

"Oh, that's rich. Maybe I should—just cut you clowns out entirely. I bet The Spanish would love to hear I'm shopping around," Jackie's said.

Don's face darkened, his meaty hand balling into a fist. "You mention The Spanish again, and I'll shove that ponytail down your throat. We're the ones risking our necks with those psychos. You don't get to play that card."

"Try it," Jackie said. "See how fast I call El Gallo instead. He's got product that don't turn my guys into zombies."

Henry grabbed Don's arm, pulling him back a step. "Ease up, Don. She's bluffing. Ain't no way she's dumb enough to cross us or The Spanish for that pussy."

Jackie tilted her head, smirking. "Keep screwing me, and you'll find out. I'm not here to eat your leftovers, I'm here to move weight. Fix this, or I fix it myself."

A pickup roared past on the road, kicking up a cloud of dust that swirled between them, gritty and choking. Don coughed, swatting it away, his glare locked on Jackie. "You're a real bitch, you know that? We bust our asses, and you cry about it."

"You're snorting half the take and calling it work. I'm the one stuck with the mess. Get me weed, or I'm done playing nice."

Henry stepped between them, hands raised. “Alright, enough. We’ll talk to the TJ boys, see what we can scrape up. But you better move that coke, Jackie. Gene’s not gonna eat the loss.”

Jackie nodded, sharp and curt, brushing dust off her sleeve. “Doubt it, asshole. But I want green by next week, or I’m not kidding about Gallo. Tell your boys to lay off the pipe and focus.”

Don muttered something under his breath, kicking the pickup’s tire, but Henry shot him a look that shut him up. The gulls wheeled overhead, their cries a jagged soundtrack to the standoff. Jackie turned, heading for the bar’s door, her flip flops crunching the dirt with purpose. “Next week,” she called over her shoulder, not looking back. “Don’t fuck me, boys.”

The door slammed behind her, leaving Don and Henry in the heat, the dust settling slow around them. Don spat again, wiping his mouth. “She’s gonna be a problem.”

Henry adjusted his shades, staring at the bar. “Yeah. But she’s right about the weed. We’ll figure it out.”

“Figure it out?” Don snorted, climbing into the pickup. “I say we dump her ass and let her sink.”

Henry slid into the driver’s seat, key turning with a growl. “Not yet. She’s got Gene’s ear. We play nice... for now.”

The engine roared, tires spitting gravel as they peeled out, leaving The Flagship behind. Inside, Jackie grabbed a beer from the bar, the cool glass a small victory against the day’s heat. She’d won this round, but the brothers’ stubborn streak lingered in her mind. The weed would come, or it wouldn’t. Either way, she’d be ready.