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BENJAMIN PAULUS

PAGANINI COMICS™ PRESENTS

EXECUTION

DAY

^ LAST | STORY
LAUGHS | :)

Execution Day

Establishing Shot:

A tall luxurious building piercing through the clouds. It is golden with pools and lush wildlife hugging the building or pouring out of windows. As the camera tilts downwards, it is revealed that the bottom of the structure is surround by 100s of kilometers of abject poverty -- there is no water or lush greenery in sight. The camera pans to the left and zooms in on a child, Zarius, walking down the street. A church like bell can be heard ringing. As everyone else around Zarius seems to be rushing home, Zarius is taking her time. She approaches a shabby ground level apartment door with an impatient mother with a slight look of terror in her eyes. She is waving Zarius in while frantically scanning the surroundings.

Mother

Hurry child, before you get us BOTH killed

Zarius

No one is coming ma, no one ever comes. It's all a lie.

Mother

Shut your mouth, child. You do not know anything of which you speak. This is for your safety!

Zarius

I know that you're scared and I'm not.

Mother

Get inside before I lock you out here and you can know true fear.

Cut to:

Inside of the shabby apartment. There is a worn down couch in the middle of the room facing a television chained to the wall. The tv has embedded cameras facing the couch. The family assembles onto the couch to face the tv. The tv has the words "Attention!" displayed.

TV Announcer

Attention. Please remain seated. Retinal scanning will begin shortly.

Mother

Everybody, open your eyes. Make sure you look at the camera.

Zarius

We know the drill, ma. This happens every other day.

Mother

Then cause no trouble, Zarius and just do as I say!

Zarius

Ma, this is all fake. It's just a tool to keep us scared and in line. This is just all cgi, like a movie. Nothing is going to happen if we don't watch it.

Mother

Who has been planting these dumb ideas in your head, Zarius? Hmm? Tell me so I can knock them back to the labor sectors.

Zarius

Nobody, ma. I just see things. You know these Last Laughs? They don't do anything the government tells them to and they're just fine.

Mother

You want to talk about gangs now?

TV Announcer

Commencing retinal scan.

Zarius

I'm not looking today.

Mother

If you don't, you won't get dinner. And I won't stop them when they drag your ass out of here.

Zarius

(Sighs)

Fine. Only because I dont know how to get food otherwise.

Mother

Now keep your mouth closed, girl.

The family sat in silence as the TV hummed. After a few moments, the TV chimed with an "all clear." And the family relaxed, but just for a moment.

Zarius

I'm not watching it today.

Mother

Excuse me, child?

Zarius

It SICKENS me! It's disgusting!

Mother

I thought you said it was all fake?

Zarius

It doesn't matter, it's grotesque! The fact they subject us to this is absurd.

Mother

You're watching it, end of discussion. This keeps us safe.

Tv Announcer

Ladies and gentlemen, the executions are about to unfold. Each criminal will now have their name, their crime committed, and their subsequent execution stated.

The Announcer begins to state the names of criminals and which district they are from. Their crimes range from extremely violent, like murder, to extremely petty, like pickpocketing. Every crime carries the punishment of death and every execution is specialized to resemble the crime.

Zarius has stood up and has begun to pace around the room. Zarius' mother and father have terrified looks on their faces.

Zarius

Safe? This makes us weak! We do it out of fear. It's not like they're actually watching to see if we watch. No way! There are just too many people for that.

Mother

Zarius, please, sit down!

Zarius

No, ma! I will not be a sheep, like you!

Tv Announcer

Criminal Jensifer Appletin.

Female, age 15.

Crime committed: shoplifting.

Execution: dismemberment.

Zarius

Jensi?

Zarius has stopped pacing and is staring at the tv screen. As the reality of what she is seeing sets in, the color begins to fade from her face.

Zarius

No.

Mother

I'm... I'm sorry Zarius. I didn't know how to tell you.

Zarius

When?

Mother

Her mother told me yesterday afternoon. The police picked her up yesterday morning.

Zarius

Bullshit! This is bullshit!

Mother

Please, keep it together child. I don't want to see you up on there next!

Zarius

You allowed this to happen! You, Pa, Jensi's mother. You allow this to happen by doing nothing!
You're just as bad as the government!

Mother

(Ashamed)

Zarius... we are just trying to protect you.

Zarius

No more, ma. I'm done. I'd rather die on the streets than be locked in her with all of you!

Zarius bolts for the front door. Her mother lunges at her but misses. Zarius is crying as she runs down the stairs into the street. The streets are completely empty. Zarius' mother had stopped at the doorway, screaming for Zarius not to leave and to come back.

Zarius takes a turn down a dirty alleyway and squats down. She begins crying into her hands.

Zarius

(Sobbing)

It's all a lie. They're all sheep and it's just a big fat lie!

Two police officers turn the corner and spot Zarius crying on the ground. Officer 1 smirks and nudges Officer 2, pointing in her direction. They draw their weapons and quickly approach her.

Officer 1
Look what we have here!

Officer 2
Looks like she's having a rough day. She doesn't even know the half of it. On your feet!

Zarius
Woah, sorry! Don't shoot!

Officer 2
What are you doing outside during the executions?

Zarius
I was just...

Officer 1
It doesn't matter. The penalty for skipping execution day is death.

(To Officer 2)

Officer 1
Cuff her and throw her in the car.

Zarius
Wait, no! Officer, no!

Officer 2 grabs Zarius by the shirt and lifts her up high against the wall. Officer 1 begins emptying out her pockets, flipping through her belongings and laughing as he tosses them on the ground.

Officer 1
I don't think you'll be needing that anymore... I think momma will want to find this one day...
Something in here has gotta make a nice souvenir.

Zarius begins to squirm, so Officer 2 throws her across the alleyway into the wall. Officer 1 goes in to kick her teeth in when he hears laughter. The officers and Zarius look around as the laughter grows louder and louder. Silhouettes of people wearing masks can be seen popping up along the outskirts of the alley.

Officer 1
What is that? What the fu..

An arrow pierces through the officer's eye, he screams and squirms as he reaches up towards it as another lands in his other socket. His body slumps to the ground. The second officer lets go of Zarius to turn around as a machete is flung through the air, splitting his head in two. Blood is splattered everywhere.

Zarius is wide eyed and stunned. Her hands are trembling as the masked vigilantes approach her. The one who threw the machete bends over and pulls out the blade with the officer's skull hitting the pavement with a loud thud

Vigilante
Sorry about the mess.

(Squatting down to be at face level with Zarius, handing her a rag)

Vigilante (Cont'd)
Here, take this.
(Beat)
Never let them see you cry.

The Vigilante gets up and as soon as they all appeared they were gone. Zarius is alone with the two dead cops holding the rag. She looks down at the rag and it is a map of the city with a smiley face sticker at a street corner not too far from where she lives.

Zarius looks around and begins to sob again. She looks at the map again and sees the smiley face sticker. Slowly, her sobs turn into giggles and then Zarius' giggles turn into laughing -- loud, maniacal laughing.

END SCENE