

His Last Shot

By John E. Miller

In the early summer morning hours, Lance drove down the empty highway, the heater of his car turned down to low, in hopes that it would dry off his clothes. He didn't need the warmth. It was one of those warm summer rains and as he drove, the windshield wipers kept time to the music on the radio. Every so often Lance caught himself watching the wipers swing back and forth across his windshield. Pay attention, he reprimanded himself. "Always keep your eyes on the road," his grandfather had told him a long time ago when he'd taught him how to drive. Lance glanced over to the passenger's seat briefly, not wanting to see the two by two foot red strongbox and the gold watch resting on top of it.

Lance thought back on what had happened at his job earlier that evening. It had started out routine. Disabling the alarm system and phone line was a breeze. He had a Master's degree in electronics and he had written his thesis on security systems. The home was a nice suburban home, widely spaced from the neighbors by a large yard. As Lance had entered the home, he had noted that it was well kept. It was Lance's habit to notice how the home was kept. Mr. Arthur Downs either had a wife who was a clean freak or they had a maid. Either way, someone was bound to be upset about the white carpet if things got messy. But then things rarely got messy. As he moved towards the steps leading upstairs to the bedrooms, Lance noticed a picture on the wall out of the corner of his eye. He recognized the man in the photo. It was a picture of Mr. Downs and a young boy who must have been his grandson holding up the catch of the day. Of course Mr. Downs was holding the smaller fish. Lance heard the chamber of a shotgun loading.

"Who the hell are you and how did you get in my house?" a loud, but frightened voice asked.

Lance looked up the stairs and saw Mr. Downs holding a shotgun in his hand. He had not put it up to his shoulder yet, but Lance knew he had only one chance to make his shot. He pulled his pistol from the shoulder holster inside his suit jacket and fired. The shot was silent, but hit its mark. Mr. Downs' shotgun broke apart, as its firing pin fell to the ground.

Mr. Downs looked down at his gun. Lance still smiled, remembering the surprise on the old man's face.

"I did not come to rob you, Mr. Downs," Lance spoke calmly. "I came here to kill you."