

Prophecies of Pastor Bill

My pants are sagging on account of the ammo, but the suspenders feel like they can handle it. I needed four pockets, pretty much standard for guys' pants, but I was worried about the magazines poking into my ass on the bus and getting me sitting funny and people noticing, so I ordered a pair with four in front just for this. "Hunting pants." Right.

Altogether, I've got five magazines of nine millimeter hollow point. Besides the four in my pants, there's the fifth I snapped into the pistol while I was getting everything out of Dad's locker. Put a loose round in the chamber too of course. He has a shoulder holster for it, so I'm rigged up okay, but I'm small for my age, so with the gun up top, the ammo down below and the homework backpack to make me look normal, I'm loaded down about as much as I can go. Exactly what I want, though. Today everything goes to the limit.

The Sig Sauer P226 X-five is a single-action repeater with a five-inch barrel and adjustable sight. You can be real accurate once you get the sight adjusted. It's also got a variable trigger-pull that I dialed back to minimum for fastest action. Dad padlocks all his guns and ammo in a cabinet in their bedroom, but he's also got a bolt cutter in the garage, so when Mom and him take off early for work and I'm home alone to catch the bus it's kind of like duh!

I got the money for the pants by selling my sister's new overcoat on eBay. Mom and Dad didn't even notice it was gone; they never go in her room since what happened. I think they're having a hard time getting over it. Me too, but I needed the money to take care of what she left behind. Besides the extra pockets, they're nice pants; I got them and the suspenders both online at L.L. Bean. I'm sure Renee would approve.

Renee was two years older than me. She was popular; everybody liked her. Or not quite everybody, I guess. Not whoever raped her and slit her throat and left her body in a dumpster. Stupid cops can't figure anything out. All they wanted to know was why she was dressed the way she was. Like it was her fault or something. Fucking cops.

When it's cold like this everybody wears parkas and snow pants, so you can have stuff bulging underneath and nobody will see and you'll still look normal. Not that anybody ever notices me. If it wasn't for the teachers that call on me or Roger and his friends that keep bumping into me on the bus and punching me and calling me a pussy, I might think I was invisible.

Girls, especially; I'm totally invisible to girls. Stuck-up bitches.

Dad took me to the range once and let me shoot his Sig, which was about the best thing we ever did. It was loud, and it kicked more than I thought it would. You have to use both hands, and you have to hold on tight. Dad said my aim was impressive. We were sitting in the lounge afterwards, and that's what he said when he leafed through the targets: "Impressive." Then he threw them in the trash and we went back out to the pickup. When I buckled my seatbelt he said, "Sit up straight." After he started the engine he said, "And stop humming all the time. You're not a canary. People will think you're a fag." He never said anything more about the targets.

He beat me up when he caught me jacking off. I didn't get the door all the way shut, and I don't know how long he'd been staring through the crack, but when I looked up and saw his eyes he kind of backed away, and then he came blasting through all red in the face and started yelling about fags and hitting on me with his fists, and after he got tired of that he pulled a belt

down from my closet door and started in again. I couldn't get away on account of my pants around my ankles so I tried to curl up, but he started whacking on my knees and thighs and yelled "open up!" and when I did it felt like the time I got hit in the nuts with a softball except way worse, and I screamed and curled up again because I couldn't help it. After he got done he said, "There, maybe that'll straighten you out."

I got some cuts on my dick and belly and my knees and thighs, and my balls turned black and blue. I got a black eye too and a cut on my chin, but I didn't want any more trouble so I told Mom and everybody that I fell off my bike. Nobody ever saw the other stuff, of course. I stayed curled up and cried a whole bunch after he left, and my balls ached like hell for however long it was before the swelling went down. A long time, couple of weeks anyhow. We never talked about it; it never happened. Except later on when I asked if we could go to the range he said "Fags don't get to go to the range," and I figured it had to be something to do with that time.

I started jacking off again after my balls got better; he was right about how I'm worthless. But fuck him, he's worthless too. Him and my mom both. They should have made the cops find out who killed Renee, but all Mom says is, "The authorities are doing everything they can, honey." Shit. Fuck the authorities, and fuck Mom, and fuck school, and fuck church, and fuck the songs, and fuck talking to God like He's your best friend and He'll do whatever you say if you use fancy words. He didn't help Renee, and what Pastor Bill said at the funeral was, "The Lord works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform."

I've got some wonders to perform, and I've got a mysterious way. Thanks for the pants, Renee.

Lacie from my algebra class goes to our church. At school she flashes fake smiles whenever she accidentally looks my way, but when she's with her parents at church she's all "Hi Sammy!" like we're best friends. Cunt.

I could go on and on about who's worthless, but the only one that's not is Mr. Peterson, my shop teacher. He helped me make a coffee table last year. Mom and Dad thought it was a piece of shit because they put it in the guest room where nobody ever goes, but he told me it was good and gave me an A. He can tell lies like everybody else, but he's not an asshole so I like him.

Nobody sits next to me on the bus. As usual. That's good. Don't want anybody accidentally touching something, don't want anything happening too soon. I need to get to my locker. The girls will be strutting their asses, the jocks will be punching each other to impress them. That'll be the time. "A time to be born and a time to die," according to Pastor Bill. He took his eyes off her casket and looked at his big Bible on the pulpit. Ecclesiastes something, he said.

The bus pulls up in front of the gym, and we all file off. I have to grab my snow pants when I step down so nothing will clink or stick out and raise suspicions. The suspenders are pulling, and everything is sagging. I'd be quite the ridiculous sight if it wasn't for my parka and snow pants. Nobody seems to notice that I'm shuffling. That's a benefit of being invisible. Roger lets the door slam in my face. That's fine, Roger, that's fine.

The teachers are coming out of the faculty lounge and heading for their classrooms. I'd like to get them too, but you can only do so much. Probably just as well; I wouldn't want to accidentally hit Mr. Peterson.

Flip the combination, open my locker. Pull out the Sig, take off the safety, lay it up on the shelf. Swivel my backpack off, hang it on a hook. Take off my parka, hang it on the other hook. Unzip the sides of my pants, grab onto the locker for balance and pull them over my boots. Everything is out in plain sight now but nobody notices; they're all talking and laughing. Cool. I'm laughing too ... inside. I'm so excited it feels like I might be gonna piss my pants.

The pants are fine, though. The suspenders are cutting into my shoulders, but everything's about to get a lot lighter. Nineteen rounds per magazine: 96 rounds counting the one in the chamber. Five magazines were all my dad had, but I'll take careful aim; I won't waste any. Got to save at least one for myself at the end. Remember, remember, remember: start counting the rounds once I get into that last magazine.

Turn around, it's show time. Kids walk past in both directions, some alone, some in groups, some serious, some laughing, some still wearing coats, almost all wearing backpacks. The hot girls are dolled up sexy as always, even their backpacks are flowery and pink and cute. They're talking to each other, giggling to the jocks, ignoring me. Kids I don't recognize, kids I sort of do but don't know their names, kids I talked to once or twice, some I know their names, most I don't. None of it matters today. There's a kid, just a kid-kid, younger than me. Must be new, I don't remember ever seeing him before.

I raise the Sig and Pow! Blood and brains spray all over everybody. Tisha Lasser was a friend of Renee's, and she's with some girls standing behind where the kid was. She's reaching around to a dark spot on the side of her pretty, blue blouse. She looks at me like "What the fuck?" I nail one through her forehead, and she's on the floor too. My heart thumps like mad, my face turns hot. I start laughing, I don't know why. It's coming from somewhere deep down.

Jesus is calling, friends! Jesus is calling! *Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling. Calling to you and to me ...* Pastor Bill would sing at the Sunday night services. The piano would join in, and then we'd all sing along.

They're screaming and running every which way. I start scanning around: aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow. Kids drop, drop, drop till the Sig clicks. I snap the magazine out on the floor and pull the first one out of my pants. Slam, lock, and here we go again ... aiming and squeezing, blowing heads as I run through halls and classrooms. Time is getting goofy; it feels like ages between trigger pulls. My legs and feet are running on their own. I keep thinking I see Mr. Peterson out of the corner of my eye, but all I can see is where I'm shooting. Over and over, a cone of pink smoke shoots out the other side their heads, and then they're down. I'd like to get Roger, but they're not people now, they're just targets. I'm God, and it's time to die! Aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow, aim-pow. Click. I snap in the next magazine.

I chase a bunch into the gym. There's an even bigger bunch already in there; everybody's yelling, and when they see me they scatter like bugs after you pick up a rock. Some jocks come at me from both sides, but I swing around and nail them, pop-pop-pop-pop-pop. When they're down I turn back to the rest jammed up in front of the locker room doors. I empty the whole rest of the magazine without even having to move. I made a huge mess on the hardwood floor; Mr. Washington will be furious about the blood stains. I reload on the way back out to the hall.

He's standing in the middle of blood and dead kids. Not running, not hiding; scowling. "Have you been trained for operating that equipment, Sammy?"

What the fuck? Is he kidding? At a time like this? I wonder if he really has been watching. I feel naked. I'm embarrassed. I don't want him grabbing for my gun, so I keep a safe distance. "I went to the range with my dad once, Mr. Peterson."

"That's nice, Sammy, but it's only one step. Have you been fully trained like we do in the shop?"

"What else is there, sir?"

"Don't you remember when we talked about how you need to fully understand equipment before you use it?"

"Well, sure. This is a gun. I know how to load it. I know how to shoot it. I think I understand it."

"But you never took any formal training other than the one time on the range, did you? Was there an instructor working with you at the range?"

"No sir, just my dad."

"Isn't that like turning the power on a lathe and going, 'Oh, I get it, it goes around and around'? Think about all the things you learned in our class and how much trouble you could have gotten into if you'd tried to use the lathe when you weren't trained."

"A gun seems pretty simple, sir. You just load it and pull the trigger."

"Sure, a lathe seems simple too. You just make it go 'round and 'round. The principle is the same, Sammy. Don't get lured into skipping the training, taking shortcuts. That's what you've done here, isn't it."

"Well, I did shoot all these kids, sir."

“Yes you did. What did I just tell you about the shortcuts? I can’t help about the problems you’ve accumulated from your mistake, I just want to get you straightened out going forward. Give me the gun, and we’re all set.”

“Set for what?”

“I can’t predict the future, Sammy. I just want to take care of this unqualified-operator issue.” He holds out his hand and nods like we already agreed.

Obviously he’s trying to trick me out of the gun, but he’s right. Mr. Peterson is always right about equipment, and I would give him the Sig just because I like him; but then I might end up alive, so no-can-do. The hall is deserted except for him and me. Everything is muffled outside my head; my ears are ringing like mad. I didn’t wear hearing protection like at the range, but this isn’t the range anymore, this is the real world. A ray of sunshine comes through one of the skylights and lights up the floor where a girl in a flowered skirt and burgundy sweater lies between us. The top of her head is gone; it’s Roxanne from my history class last year. She was real popular. Popular like Renee. It’s like God is aiming a spotlight to show the world what I’ve done. Sirens are squealing in the distance, wee-o, wee-o, wee-o, wee-o, and they’re getting louder. All this chit-chat is messing with my plan!

“I’ll be right back,” I say, turning away. I run into my algebra classroom. Ms. Gonzales darts over and stands in front of some kids huddled in a corner. Her mouth is open, her eyes are bugged out; she’s holding her arms out behind like a mother hen spreading her wings over baby chicks. Being a hero, I guess, protecting them. She’s a nice lady and a good teacher; now she’s a hero too. You gotta admire that. Pow. She goes down. Pow, pow, pow, pow, the ones she was protecting slump on top, covering her body with theirs. “Hi Lacie!” She makes a run for

the door. Pow. “Bye Lacie!” I amble around from desk to desk. It’s like slow motion while I empty the rest of the magazine. They’re all curled up under their desks like that’ll save them. Serena was good at factoring, Tony always got the answer first, Bruce was a dummy like me. Lorene looks at me with desperate eyes. “Please, Sammy?” she squeaks. One by one, they all get gone.

I never noticed before how there were nineteen kids in my algebra class. That’s how many were in class today anyhow: nineteen minus me plus Ms. Gonzales. Coincidence, just happening to match my magazine? Pastor Bill would say it’s a sign that the Lord is blessing me. He said in Sunday school that the Lord blessed the Children of Israel when they went around and slew their neighbors with axes and stuff, so maybe for reals about the sunbeam.

I come back out loading the last magazine from my pants, and Mr. Peterson is trotting up like he’s been somewhere too. He says, “Sammy, I’m gonna teach you about gun safety now.” The sirens have gotten louder and stopped. At the far end of the hall people are yelling and running.

“You better hurry, sir. I’m gonna be busy here in a minute.”

He’s got a gun in his hand, and he raises it till I’m looking straight down the barrel. He takes a deep breath and lets out a long sigh. Tears are in his eyes. I raise the Sig and point it at him but keep my finger outside the trigger guard. I look in his eyes and nod my head. Men are shouting and boots are pounding close. He squints, purses his lips and shakes his head. The boots stop, and weapons are clicking and clacking. I yell real loud so everybody can hear, “I’m gonna shoot you, Mr. Peterson!” A tear starts down his cheek, and a muscle in his forearm sticks out, tightening, curling his finger around the trigger.

Somebody yells, “Drop the gun now, kid!” I shake my head.