

Getting Even

Jason was sixty-eight and alone. His wife died a few years ago from cancer and his only son died about ten years back. The police concluded that his son, twenty-eight at the time, was shot in a drug deal that had gone bad. Now, all the old man really had was an apartment over his auto body shop, a dog, and lots of time. Though he no longer had any employees, he still loved that shop and used it occasionally for his own little projects.

He had never really gotten over his son's death. Sometimes his sadness would become so strong that he couldn't sleep. On those nights, he'd get in his car and take a drive.

It was 3:30 in the morning and he was tired. He had driven around the block in this poor neighborhood three or four times when he finally decided to pull over for a few minutes and rest. That's all he would need – a few minutes. So he pulled his Crown Vic to the curb and let it idle while he rested his head on the window. It wasn't long before he heard someone tapping on his window just above his head. He didn't respond to the tapping, but then the tapping became pounding and the whole window shook. He jerked awake and looked startled at this intrusion.

The man outside the glass had dark skin that made his gold teeth more apparent. His hair hung in dregs. "Open the damned window!" he commanded.

Jason lowered the window about half the way. As if confused, he looked at the man: "Doan . . . don't worry, I'm going," Jason said as he fumbled for the gear lever to put the car in drive. But that was not to be. The man in dregs reached in across the steering wheel and held the shift lever in Park.

His head was half in the window opening. He cocked his head to the side and looked directly at the old man. "You been drivin' around the hood for a while here, so whats you want? You here to buy or what?"

Jason's hand dropped from the lever to his side so the other man let go of the lever and stood back outside the door.

"Buy? No, I don't want to buy a thing; I . . . I'm just lost is all. I was tired and wanted to rest."

Jason was scared and the dealer knew it. He seemed to enjoy this fact. He grinned so his bling sparkled and then let out a couple of snorts. If his set of golden teeth was intended to intimidate. It must have had its effect because Jason just sat there frozen.

"No, old man, you ain't leaving your ass no where 'till you'se pays up." The gangster said as he slowly looked Jason over from his eyes to his crotch and the back to his eyes. "Whats you got, old man??"

"Got? I don't understand."

"Money bitch! Let's see the cash. Whats you got?"

Jason looked scared and fumbled under himself for his wallet. "I only have a little," he stammered. His hand was shaking so much his wallet opened just enough for a hundred to show. "and I need that to pay rent."

The man's eyes widened. Not just because he saw the \$100 bill, but because he could see that there were other bills behind it. He smiled his golden smile: "Just hand over what you got, old man; that is, if you want to gets out of here alive."

Jason quickly dropped the wallet beside his lap and reached up for the gear lever, but the gangster was too fast. The man reached through the open window again and popped Jason's hand back. Jason used his left hand to pull the window control up just as the street dealer tried to reach through for the wallet. He pulled his arm out just in time. "What the Fuck!" He yelled. The dealer reached behind his sagging pants, and, in one swift motion, had a pistol out and pointed at the old man. Jason looked terrified. The gangster said. "Get that goddamned wallet out and open the goddamned window."

Jason was trembling. "Ok, Ok, you can have it!" he stammered. Just put the gun down."

“You got to the count of three to sling that thing!”

“Yah, yah, yes sir,” he stammered, “it . . . it’s right here,” he said as he reached where it had dropped on the floorboard. “You can have it!”

Just as Jason sat back up from regaining his wallet, the gangster counted, “Three, two, one . . .”

Three shots rang out and there were three bullet holes in the driver’s side door.

Jason no longer looked scared. He wasn’t trembling; he just stared steadily at the gangster whose eyes were opened wide as if in shock and maybe disbelief. The dark man’s pistol dropped. He slumped against the window and slowly slid down the door to the ground. Once he heard the man’s body meet the street, Jason calmly placed his hand on the seat beside him, then reached up to put his idling car into drive. He gently pressed the accelerator to re-enter the dark and quiet street. The silence that descended upon the street after the three shots rang out was broken by the crunch and snap of bone as the rear wheel rolled over an ankle on the pavement.

Jason was probably thinking about his son’s death as he re-entered the street and slowly gained speed to the 25-mph limit of the neighborhood. He slowed to a stop at a street sign, turned right, and headed back to the interstate and to his dog and the dark apartment over his auto body shop. The only indication that there had been any trouble at all was in his driver’s side door where there were three holes. From each, the metal was shredded outward and looked much like lips pursed to kiss a welcomed guest. It was the only evidence that he’d had anything to do with that ‘drug related’ crime, but, like all the times before, he’d take care of that.