

Future Dead Profit

By Isaac Cook Handelman

I get this idea one day, when I'm stoned -- to just kill one. Maybe it would help show the world what they are. Not that the world doesn't already know. Not that people don't know. But, maybe it would wake people up. Energize them. Maybe it would start the revolution, the first guillotine to fall on the neck of a monster who burned the world and killed the others to make himself a ruler. A king. A billionaire. An unabashed capitalist. Racist, capitalist scum.

I think, if I did that, it might free me a little bit. See, I feel guilty a lot. Like I'm one of them. No better than the rich men. Because, in a way, I'm not. I'm a privileged white guy who has the time and the naivety to spend his days wallowing in sad, futile, oligarchical reality, a reality created by me. People like me. And a reality that's been lived in by other people — of color, mostly — whose awareness of the surrounding systems built to oppress and destroy them tower in incomprehensible horror against the tiny bit of realization I've had recently, that hey, the world is, actually, maybe not a good place. That people aren't good.

Okay, it's not just "people" who aren't good. It's *some* people. It's *white* people. But it's not even *just* white people. It's *motivated* white people. *Profit-motivated* white people.

See, I realize that people aren't the problem. Individuals, at least, aren't the problem. Fucking *society* is the problem. *Systems. Social stratification. A lack of empathy.*

FUCKING CAPITLISTS.

That's why I get that idea one day. To carve out a little space, a little piece of the monster, a piece that I can skewer and hold up, impaled, for all to see. It probably won't do anything. But then again, right now I'm *definitely* not doing anything. Why not try to make an impact?

A bullet makes a fucking impact.

A man fires a bullet.

A bullet goes *whiz*

Smack

Crunch

Splatter

Blood and brains on the sidewalk, in thick chunks.

Dead in a second.

They'll send people for me, sure. I probably won't get away. That's okay. I don't need to get away. I just need to be the man who pulls the trigger.

Well, it doesn't *have* to be *me*. But I don't see anyone else doing it, and I don't see myself doing anything else.

I kick back and light up a blackened bowl of Jungle Juice. Top shelf stuff -- nice strain, good grower, no pesticides and shit. Only have an eighth of it, cause it's expensive. Once I run through this stuff, it'll be back to Connie Chung. Shitty interviewer, worse weed. All dense, dry, sluggish. No pep in her step. But that ounce isn't going to burn itself.

I inhale, gulping the smoke into my lungs. Tastes faintly of the butane that combusted it. Close my eyes and hold it in a second. Not too long or the tar will cake inside me. Then out, in a smooth, skunky stream. Tastes nicer here, faintly chocolatey, like a chunk of Hershey's that fell in the firepit, but it's the last piece and well, you haven't had your s'more yet. I open my eyes and wait for the bud to take effect.

When it does, I'm soaring. Feeling like a million bucks. Get lost in an antiwork forum, where some like minded folks are going on about how the boomers ruined everything. How they hoarded it all, and now they won't let it go. I may be complicit, but at least I'm a millennial.

Fuck. Snap to attention. Deep breath. Focus on the task at hand. Snap your complicity. Make something of yourself.

Stand up. *Time to go*. Gotta get a gun.

Outside, it's cold. Don't have a jacket. *Fuck*. Should've brought a jacket. Nothing to cover my arms, plus I've got this weed shit clanking around in my pocket. Lighter, piece, big grinder full of bud. Just in case.

Stupid. Can't walk into a gun store like this.

But I realize, *yes I can. Anybody can! Well... any white American*. Would a person of less privilege be able to do the same? I shake my head. *Getting caught up in the details again. Focus on the big picture.*

I'm here. Been walking for what feels like just a minute, and I'm here. Gun shop on every corner, I guess. This is America.

Guy at the counter is exactly who I expect him to be. Wasn't expecting this, and it makes me nervous. Hands stuffed in my pockets to keep the goods from rattling around.

I approach the counter, and after a few moments of him not saying anything I tell him, "I'd like to buy a gun."

"What type?" he asks. Which catches me off guard.

I haven't thought this far ahead. *Shit*. I strain, trying to keep my cool.

"Uhm, well, I don't really know. I guess I'd like to kill from a distance, if possible. Something that can do that."

Shopkeeper raises his eyebrows. "From a distance." Monotone. "What distance?"

I bite my lip. *Fuck*. I realize that I should've taken some measurements before I came in here. Done some planning. But here I am, and the guns look cool. I want one, and I want it today. I want to get my plan in motion. So, I make some shit up.

"5000 yards."

Nothing, then Shopkeeper raises his eyebrows even farther. "5000 yards?" Now he sounds inquisitive. Faintly sarcastic.

When I tell him my actual plan -- to splatter a billionaire's brains all over the pavement they're walking on -- he lets out a big, guttural belly laugh and claps me on the shoulder, giving me a shake of what feels like camaraderie. "That's the craziest shit I've heard from anyone since yesterday!" Sardonic tone indicates the last part is meant, I think, as a joke, but I don't react. Gun violence is horrific, gun deaths epidemic, mass shootings no longer news. America's libertarian instinct to hold onto its guns while teaching generations of white males to hate and dominate the *other* is not something I feel comfortable joking about.

When I don't laugh, he goes back to monotone, but helpfully informs me that the longest range commercial guns are only good up to about a thousand yards. I politely thank him for his guidance and walk out of there feeling noble and happy, a Remington 700 SP-something strapped up on my back, under my shirt so as not to raise attention.

I take the gun to a range three times a week. For practice. I've never fired a gun before. I learn I'm not a natural.

Big man named Jack approaches me the third time I go. Hulking in both directions, spine bent all out of whack from the years he's spent corralling kids at Sunday School. Tells me all about it the first time we meet. Speaks with a slight lisp.

"Hardetht job in the world, you know." Maybe more than slight. "Theeth kidth' parenth thend them to learn about Jeethuth. Thing ith, kidth don't give a thit about thuch thingth. Athk me, they'd be muthch better off learnin to fire one of thethe thingth. Exthibit A!" Jack chuckles and claps me on the shoulder. Gun people seem to love doing that.

Takes me a moment to realize he's talking about me, but it shouldn't. He just watched me flub a shot so badly it bruised my shoulder, blackened my eye and probably burst both my eardrums.

Gun wasn't even loaded.

Jack spends a while telling me about the speech therapy his elementary education tried to stuff down his throat. Sounds like the old warlock who pulled kids out of classes to school them in the fine art of proper pronunciation really did a number on old Jack. More harm than help.

“Kidth never looked at me the thame after I thtarted getting pulled out. Luckily, I found tholathe.” He winks, at me I think, and makes a vague gesture at the landscape surrounding us, several lanes of wide-open field, separated by fences that don’t seem to do anything, with targets staggered every hundred yards in each lane. Shots ringing out a couple times a minute. Dudes firing their loads. Getting their rocks off.

Jack teaches me how to load the gun, how to hold the gun, how to aim the gun, but not how to fire the gun. “Gotta feel that part yourthelf,” he says. “Jutht exhale deeply, pull the trigger, and will the bullet where you want it to go. Like Luke Thkywalker, when he blowth up the Death Thtar.”

Get home from my third day on the range. My shoulder hurts, as does my right eye. Right hand is cramping from hours in the trigger-pressing position. Check my bowl. Looks spent. Green flecks. Still worth a shot.

Light ‘er up, and a bright red cherry greets me. Smoke swirls in the body of my noble steed, a crudely horse-shaped bong I bought at a street fair. Close my eyes and let the smoke seep into me. Let my exhaustion ooze out.

Then, I'm coughing. A big, nasty fit. Mucous forcing its way back up my throat. I sound like I have fucking COVID. Weed's really hitting me now. Feeling light-headed. Deep breaths. Check the bowl. I'm pretty well done, but it's been a long day. May as well just fry the fish.

Zoot, crackle, suck, swallow. Tastes like butane again. Feels good, though. Like a million

Fucks. The mission. Need to focus on the task at hand. I'm not what's important. The weed helps me feel better, but it doesn't matter how I feel.

It matters what I do.

Hell, I don't even really know what I'm thinking about doing yet. Realize I need to make a plan.

Can't believe I haven't made a plan yet. Palm hits face. *Stupid, stupid, stupid.*

Deep breath. Straighten up. Eyes open. *You can do this.*

Self-loathing never got anyone anywhere.

Sure as shit didn't get Jeff to the top.

Jeff

I get to work making a plan.

Blazed still, and the euphoria came late this time. Feeling it now. Things are making sense. Stuff is looking good. The plan practically makes itself:

1. Tail Jeff for a week or so, to figure out his schedule.
2. Find a predictable, repeated location with a good hidey-hole to camp in, with a clear sight-line to Jeff at some point.
3. Camp there, and when Jeff arrives
4. Paint his brains all over the sidewalk.

Don't care about anything after that. They'll probably lock me up. Maybe execute me.

I seize up, suddenly aware of a hole in my plan. The attention. It'll go to *me*, like it does to all the others who pull the trigger. Whether I'm like them or not. I know I'm *not*.

But still...they'll turn me into an instrument of fear, a sad, disturbing anomaly, a name that rings hollow in history classes, devoid of life or meaning except what he took from the world, which was the life of another. Forgotten. Can't be sure how this will go down. *I don't care about my own legacy, but what if mine overshadows his?*

Suddenly, I'm laughing. Uncontrollably. Guffawing. A real giggle fit. I'm laughing at myself, at how utterly *stupid* I sound. I'm in fucking hysterics over it. Maybe it was the weed, scrapings from several jars I'd been meaning to clean out for quite some time. But, *no* — what's funny is the notion, the mere consideration, that history might remember *me*

over *Jeff*

and his *splattered*

fucking

brains.

I decide the plan is workable.

Not all is miserable work and necessary murder, of course. Sam's face, smiling, beaming at me, eyes big as baseballs. Beautiful, beautiful Sam.

Gotta pack some weed before I go.

The truth is, I'm afraid this plan will end just like all my others: unfinished and unyielding except for a few hours of feeling worthwhile. Making good. Making *change*. Doing my part to make the world better.

But something feels different this time. I don't know what. It's not my resolve. Is it? I might be stronger now, smarter. Probably not, though. If I had to guess, I'd say what's different is, this time, I'm not trying too hard.

I'm just doing it.

I'm not judging myself.

I'm getting lost in the act of creation.

The creation of a new world.

A better world.

It's an easy drive to Jeff's nearest house. Thankfully. Because the joint I smoked on the way certainly made the journey more interesting. Fun was had along the way, but I got there intact. I'd bet you could, too. Even plowing drunk, zinked, yinked, baked once, twice, thrice, or whatever your preferred form of alteration is. Jeff has places everywhere, so you're probably near one.

My destination is on the right.

I'm camped out in a bush about two hundred yards from Jeff's front door. Much closer than I'd imagined I'd be able to get. But, security is light around here. Street crime isn't of much concern in this lakeside neighborhood, I guess. Anywhoo, I expect Jeff's escorted by an armed Prime Pig or five whenever he's in public. Not that any of that will matter here, because all I need is *one*

clean

shot.

Like Luke Thkywalker, when he blowth up the Death Thtar.

I was planning on tailing Jeff around for a few days, sussing out his schedule, picking the perfect spot. But now I'm getting antsy, and this setup seems perfectly adequate. My only viable escape route is the lake, but I have no plans to escape. Once I've done the deed, it doesn't matter what happens to me

The gun is on my back, tucked crudely under my shirt and into my pants, still jutting out of the fabric in the spot right under the back of my neck, the butt sticking up a foot over my head.

I carefully lift it out, hands working behind my back. The barrel slides through my buttcheeks and I wince at its coldness. This also gives me an idea: shit on the bullet. Actual shit. My shit. In Jeff's brains. Mixed around on the sidewalk in a gooey, chunky stew.

Insult to injury, that's the term. Jeff is scum, and he deserves it. You know he does.

As do a million other fucking people.

(Myself included?)

But Jeff will be the one I do. The one I get done. The first big one. I'll make people realize what they can do. What power they still have. It requires sacrificing a lot, sure. But, the more people who do it, the less sacrifice it will take for each individual. And think of the gains for society:

1. Eliminate a member of the ruling class.
2. Incentivize gun ownership among leftists?
3. Hopefully help motivate a violent yet inclusive multi ethno-cultural working-class peoples' revolution to topple the capitalist superstate that has only ever consumed and destroyed and don't give me that fucking shit about how "Hey at least it's given us scientific progress" because FUCK scientific progress, if *this* world is the cost of scientific progress then ***fuck*** scientific progress, ***fuck it forever***. Let me forage for nuts and berries.

I cannot believe that ***this*** is the only way.

There *must* be a better way.

(Unless there is no way at all. Not before the timer runs out.)

All good things.

It wouldn't be right for me to be in the spotlight. White men always are. We get credit for everything. We get to do everything. We need to step aside and let other people do things. So why am I out here doing this thing? I'm such a fucking typical white man. I think that if I want to do this thing, I should be able to do this thing, so I do the thing, and *hey* I can do the thing, look at that I can do the thing. I know now that these powers are derived from society's *letting* me do the thing, *because* I am a white man with a white man's superprivilege. I am bulletproof.

Figuratively. So is Jeff. But again, only figuratively. In killing Jeff, I seek to destroy the spotlight whose pulpit he has so blatantly abused. My greatest fear is that I will instead inadvertently put *myself* in the spotlight for all of this. The spotlight must belong to **Jeff**. It always has, and there's no taking it away from him. All I can do is smear it with my shit, shatter it with my rifle, and hope its resulting light shines in a way that conveys my general sentiment. Sketch a rough outline, and hope it comes across.

It's the best I can do.

I've gotta believe.

Movement out of the corner of my eye yanks my attention to the driveway in front of Jeff's house. *Fuck.*

There. He Fucking. Is. It's him. I don't believe my eyes at first, but it really fucking *is him*. My jaw goes slack at the sight of his grotesque top appendage.

Suddenly, I'm gripped in the chest with the extreme pressure of hesitation, but plain instinct wins out and I raise the rifle, taking aim at that noggin.

He's exiting the driveway in a tricked-out wheelless Model ∞ , trailed by a predictable big black SUV stuffed with Prime Pigs. Even through the windshield, his face is unmistakable.

Unchanged, static since middle age thanks to a steady supply of well-paid blood bags, whom certain alternative publications (whose sources I know to be accurate) claim Jeff insists on sucking dry personally, straight out of their needle-prick wounds.

Fucking disgusting.

In that moment, there is no question.

Pink flesh in my crosshairs, I pull the trigger.

Bullet smashes Jeff's bottom jaw clean from the rest of his head. He switches and slumps.

I freeze in stunned silence. Prime Pigs flood out of the vehicle behind Jeff's stalled ∞.

Then I realize something's wrong.

It hits me as the Pigs pass Jeff's corpse without even glancing at it. They almost look like they're coming straight at

Offuckingcoursethey'recomingforME. I just thought they'd be-

No blood. No blood.

No blood on Jeff.

Even Jeff still needs blood. *Young blood.*

No splatter.

No brains.

A setup. A bait-and-switch.

An imposter.

Should've fucking known. Probably a T-Bot with some epidermal implants.

I laugh as the Prime Pigs encircle me, blaring: "DROP YOUR WEAPON. HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD." They don't shoot me on sight, which could be a liability thing. Probably it's just white privilege.

Now I'm all tucked in. Comfortable and safe, in my new white-padded coffin-house.

Fed and bathed at least, and not overworked. Plenty of free time, during which I sleep.

I find myself dreaming again. I miss the weed, but the dreams are nice for a change.

Until one night, I dream I am visited by a terrible monster. He looks like a man, but proves he's not. I can't move. I am paralyzed in this dream. The man pricks me gently, carefully, in a spot just below my wrist. Then, all I feel is warmth. His warmth on me, wet and suctioned. Mine, flowing into him. My chest seizes. I can feel my pulse rising.

I need this man to stop.

But I know he won't. His kind never does.

Not until everything is his, and he is everything.

And now I am him, and I profit.