

Gun

Pt. 1 of 4

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My name is Moses. Moses Gunn. No relation to the actor.

I'm a detective: not in the vein of Marlowe or Spade, or even Easy Rawlins. I see myself as a Mike Hammer type, or even a John Shaft (novel not movie). A Race Williams throwback. Dad passed his novels to me. Hammer and Race were the ones I'd read on my free time in the barracks while serving. They stayed with me, making an impression.

Now I run a P.I./protection agency.

I didn't search for clues; I extracted information from people with no real desire to give it without me using a pair of brass knuckles in a dark alleyway.

Let me break it down.

I was hired by someone rich, to protect someone of value. The price was high and just the way I liked it.

I did my job-just not good enough. The person of value didn't make it past noon. I'd been fired. My rep was now tarnished & I wasn't going to let that stand. A man's rep in this business is the only thing that can keep the clients coming in.

Now I was loaded to bear, and on the make. Whoever did the hit wasn't going to see tomorrow.

OnE

An hour before:

Sometimes a 9mm GLOCK in the mouth, beats two slugs in the gut.

Or so you'd think since Derek Stupid had the pleasure of mine nestled inside the back of his throat. Yeah, this guy's last name's Stupid. You'd wonder why he'd become a snitch with a name like that? We were in the alleyway behind Tai Lung's Chinese food palace off Highland & Pine. It was daytime and the trash was ripe under the hot Highland IL sun. I wore a brown nylon tee-shirt that clung to me with sweat & a pair of baggy blue jeans that had a holster built into the inside of the pants leg strapped mid-thigh high. The opening was a Velcro flap. Stupid here had a notorious weapon-phobia. Couldn't carry anything 'cause his Mommy had a thing for men with tattoos that used him for target practice, or so I've heard. Derek looked like Tony Montana without the money or a pair to give him guts. His eyes were wide and he was fighting back gag-reflux. His words made as much sense as a Hilton with a TV show. I pulled the GLOCK out slowly, knowing he was used to something that size in his mouth. He just got out of the stir three months ago. Heard he was tossing salads and playing circus seal.

"Try repeating that without my gun in your mouth Stupid, you'd make more sense," as I wiped the spittle onto his bright green Polo wide-collared shirt.

"I-I don't know anything about uh hit on some rich guy's son. I've been keepin' my head low, my nose clean." I believed him. If he could only look me in the eyes as he said that.

"I'm in the mood to reach for my throwaway .38 and play five questions. Why five? Cause you don't want the sixth question to be answered. Now, I want to know who put the sniper bullet threw the bulletproof windshield of the limo I was guarding. You know it had to be that way 'cause no one could've gotten within half a mile of that car or I would have known it. Someone knew I was doing this job, & knew enough to keep out of my reach. Now," tapping the barrel of the 9mm on his forehead, "Who. Shot. The. Richardson. Son! Who had a reason to get the old man's goat and have him go on the warpath? This would have meant nothing to me, but it was my job, my money, and my rep that all got pissed into the wind. Now," I slipped the GLOCK into the hidden holster, grabbed Stupid by his shirt, flinging him over my right shoulder into a pile of garbage bags, scattering the stray cats hidden underneath. The cats were angry, but not as angry as I was getting. Stupid slipped on a banana peel trying to get back up. Any other time I'd find that humorous, just not today.

I was on top of him, blackjack in right hand, his throat in my other, right hand ready to come down on his skull, making the info pour out of his mouth in one form or another. He turned a whiter shade of white and his unshaven chin was drenched with spittle. The words ran out his lipless mouth.

"Aight, aight, aight! Just j-just don't hit me! L-look, I don't know who did it exactly," the blackjack went a little higher and he could see that. "No! No! wait, wait! I did hear somethin' about the old man not playin' ball with somebody though."

"Who'd know the who and why? Names, Stupid. Make with the names or I make with the sap, get me!" How many times do you get in a situation where you can get Race Williams/Mike Hammer on a snitch. I relaxed the hand with the blackjack a little. I never relaxed totally with Stupid. He's the type dumb enough to try something. Then I'd have to answer to the cops. He wiped the sweat from his wrinkled forehead with his burnt-tan hairy forearm.

"Jeez, man. All you had ta do was ask nicer. You know, give me a little respect."

"I'm respecting you now by not slamming my heel into your neck, smacking you with my sap, and rolling you down to 'Big' Ben Riley over at Greenway's Pool hall. If memory serves, he still has a 'thing' for you, a little debt you owe him for keeping you alive in the stir not too long ago. He likes using those train tracks a lot doesn't he?" Stupid didn't like that idea at all. I got off his chest, letting him sit on a metal trashcan.

"There's a deli over on the corner of 2nd, off of Walnut Street. Romanoff's. It's a front for the Chicago crew connected to the now exported 'father of extortion' himself Vyacheslav Ivankov. They still take orders from him, even though he's in prison in Russia. The extortion racket is their bread and butter Moses, if anyone would know about your little *screw-up*," I didn't like that, and I made it very clear to Stupid. The sap disappeared, and a leather-gloved open hand came down and across both sides of Derek's boney face hard enough to knock him out. He folded into the trash, cozying with the rest of the garbage. I chucked a crumpled twenty onto his chest. I may need him again, but I didn't have to like it.

Two

An hour after.

I stopped off at my office to pick up a few things (guns, knives, bats, pipes, bulletproof vest, etc) and hid them in the back trunk lining of my mint green 1994 Mitsubishi 3000GT. The lining was water proofed since the last time. This was my business car. The car, though nice & quick, is nothing to my 1970 aqua blue GTO.

Now that's a car.

The 3000 helped me skirt in and out of traffic as I parked a block before Romanoff's. I left all the heavy gear in the lining, kept one obvious for them to find, and the rest, hell, if you weren't looking, you'd never find some of the blades and various other things. I've a .22 nestled somewhere-but I'm not telling. It was a short walk that I made longer by looking over the front of the store, seeing how much protection the Russians had. To the average person just walking by without paying notice, wouldn't see the guy in the red flannel and dungarees holding up the wall on the Photomat next store. He was lighting his tenth Prima cigarette to go along with the pile he had gathering around his feet. The smell coming from them was different from regular cigs and some Russians took pride in their country's product. Three older Russians who looked like they were extras from a Copula movie, played cards on a small round table, while another guard looming near, watched. They probably had a room on the top floor apt. building across the street as lookout. I came back around after my first lap approaching one of the older Russians who was eyeing his cards in disgust. The guard was between me and him instantly and the guy near the Photomat was now behind me.

“Потеряйтесь прежде, чем Вы становитесь мертвыми, идиот!”

(Get lost before you get dead, idiot!)

The older Russian kept on playing as he said in English that was learned perfect, "Jimmy, you may want to speak in English, the boy might not understand Russian: No need to be hostile toward a stranger. Not until we know what he wants."

“Вверните его, босса. Как будто имеет значение, если он понимает меня или нет.” (Screw him, boss. As if it matters if he understands me or not.)

The guy behind me was hostile in tone, so I decided to speak up.

“Если бы Вы желаете держать ваши шары приложенными, я слушал бы вашего босса. Я должен здесь заняться хитом, который понижался вокруг полудня сегодня, и мне говорили, что это - то, куда я должен был бы пойти.”

("If you wish to keep your balls attached, I'd listen to your boss. I'm here to see about a hit that went down around noon today and I was told this is where I'd have to go.")

The old man started to laugh a deep and guttural laugh as the reflection of the guy behind me showed a shocked & pissed Russian. "Oh," said the old man, "so you understand us, eh?" He picked his teeth with the end of a playing card. "You intrigue me boy, come, come inside where we can chat without peering eyes or interested ears." His bearded chin nodded past me, and I causally looked over my shoulder to see an unmarked tan van parked a few stores down. I turned back, and the security was back at their posts.

The old man led me through the deli door to one more security stop inside. Took the obvious piece from my holster covered by my sports jacket & then led me into the back room-behind the deli counter.

ThreeE

There was a long couch in a room the size of a police interrogation room with wood panel flooring and brown carpeting. A poker table with four chairs sat in the left corner. A metal office desk with file cabinet sat left of a flat-screened 20 inch. The bearded gentleman who said to call him 'Sergio'-sat like an old man does down into the couch. Slow-and-carefully.

"What can I do for you Moses?"

I pulled up a chair from the poker table.

"So, you know me then?"

"Of you, is a more apt way of putting it. You are a sizeable fish in this pond my boy. You are only here, 'cause you have the reputation of being on no ones side but yours. You do not deal with Feds, or the ATF whom you have had the pleasure of seeing their tan van parked a ways down. You are here about the Richardson hit, correct?"

Everyone's so forthcoming with information lately. My sap's getting lonely.

"Yeah, I'm here to see if you know who or where I can find them, and at what price I'll have to pay." I was in the lion's pit but wasn't nervous. I had the .22, four clips, a fold-out that I could gut 'Sergio' from the throat to his crotch with, a solid steel sap, and my jacket was made of a Kevlar mesh that would take some of the brunt of small calibers. I took note of the rear exit along with the rest of the place's layout. I'd be bruised and still need medical, but hell, I'd be breathing. 'Sergio' squeezed into his dark blue slacks with the great effort it would take a 300 plus sized man who kept his cell in his pocket, flipped it open, hit one button, and spoke into it one word at a time.

"Me." He said. "Yes. Here. Now. Where? When? All right. Bye." He closed the phone. Smiled at the phone, "There. Let them try to trace that call. ATF, bah! Anyhow, five grand up front. You get a name, a place, and the time when the query is present at the specified location." I never crossed sickles with 'Sergio' or his ilk, so I wouldn't suspect them of anything shady. Though I'd never dismiss the thought. I reached into the inner pocket of my coat, pulling out my disposable palm pilot and pen, activating the LCD screen. A few taps on the screen and the transaction would be complete. I needed one more thing. "What's your overseas account transfer number?" I asked.

I handed the pilot to 'Sergio' as he roll-leaned over and grabbed at it. He slipped on a pair of brass colored bifocals, tapped a few numbers, and handed it back to me.

"You have a trash can?" He pointed over to the space behind the file cabinet at the same time his cell beeped. He looked at the LCD screen on the outside-then said, "It is good. You can go ahead." I pressed the small red button on the under side of the pilot, walked over to the garbage can, and flung it in. A small beep and a sizzle of plastic and metal left ozone floating in the air. Modern technology. You gotta love it.

I sat back down. He dug out a pen and paper from the end table next to the couch. Scrawled out something on it, handing it to me. "Here is the name, address, and time when the query will be there. Seems like he has another job that is keeping him in town. Most would have left after doing Richardson, but he must have double booked. Guess he does not see you as a threat." The Russian laughed turning on the 20-inch with his remote. MSNBC was on. "Ah, Katrina. She was a very bad storm. You know, I donated to the Red Cross I felt so bad for them. The French quarter is a joyous place that I will miss."

I stood, zipping my coat. "Hallway on your left outside the door." He pointed to the rear exit.

FouR

I could hear the tick-tock of the clock that rested over my steel file cabinet in my office where I had finished packing my weatherproof black duffle. I was gearing up to get mine, and ready to give that special someone a back full of unregistered lead. Everything was loaded with me wearing latex gloves and wiped clean even after. The blood was flowing to the tips of my ears. Someone was ready to get their 'dead' on, and I was the DJ to start the party. The Russian wrote down this: 'Name: Jerry Bell, most likely an alias; He and a few associates had rented a house at the end of R & T road off Route 70 with the cross street being Prairie; Time: 10pm.' I had the 3000GT gassed and ready. Who'd this joker think I was, some jerk that'd let someone just come in out the goddamn blue and screw me out of my check! Take and piss on my rep?! This guy was just begging for the feel of burning lead shoved directly down his throat. And staying in town was an even worse insult at that. My back molars were clenched so damn hard I could feel them flex. I was decked out in Kevlar and leather, ready for death!

I slammed the door on my way out of my office.

The clouded glass with my name on it-vibrated in response.

FivE

I was half way over the bridge, crossing over Highland Silver Lake. The cool feel of moisture grew slight beads of water on my windshield. My windows were down; I was trying to cool off. I was in for the kill, and couldn't afford to lose cool. A few trees passed by on my left once I was over the lake, and a few cars blew by. Nighttime in Highland was not like some cities. It was a suburb. I turned right onto Prairie Rd. following it past remolded empty two story ranches with 21-century real estate signs shoved into newly planted lawns. I came to the left where it would lead me to the dead end road of R & T Rd. I turned off the 3000GT and coasted it into the woods. I slipped out the passenger side with the duffle bag in tow. I had my black ski mask and night vision on and running. There was nothing but woods around. The area hadn't been cleared for construction. Their house was the only one there. I stuck close to the brush, hunch-running on the side of the road until I came to the stockade style fence surrounding the one floor full brick house with a two-car garage and white drainage lacing the roof. Bastards got a \$400,000 house here and rented the damn thing. The lights glared threw the three front windows, letting me take off the night-vision, seeing right into the house. I stayed close to the fence, opening the duffle bag, pulling out my modified Mack-ten in my left, military .45 with extended clip and hollows in my right. I flung the duffle around resting on my chest, leaving a hand hole open for the grenades inside. I stayed against the fence, sliding across it, up near the power lines against the house near the circuit breaker. I heard noses. Four, maybe five of them. I didn't care. I was gonna spray the whole place and chuck in a few grenades for good measure. No, I wasn't interested in who they were anymore. I just wanted them dead. If enough survived for I.D.-fine. I had my blade out, teeth facing the main, about to cut the power and rain holy death down on theses bastards when.....

FLICK, PLICK, CLICK, FLASH, PHISH, PLICK, FLICK, PLICK, CLICK, FLASH, PHISH, PLICK! All around me, floodlights burst on and I was the cockroach caught in the kitchen.

"Come on now, Moses. At least make it a sporting hunt." A shadow spoke through a mega-phone, behind glaring floodlights. "Just who the *hell* are you to me?! Jerry I presume. Who are you to jack up my rep and play with my money?" I kept on talking, trying to figure what to do. I was stupid. Anger got the best of me. I took a quick look into the house through a nearby window. The stereo on the far wall was playing. 'Jerry' noticed me looking. "Isn't technology wonderful. The surround sound system the Americans have in this house is a thing of beauty. Doesn't hurt the fact that you must have been very pissed off, having someone take your meal ticket away, uh-ah, keep the .45 down. I wouldn't want to put a bullet between that light brown forehead and end the chase so soon." To hell with it! I feint as if I was co-operating, then swung the Mack-ten in the direct of the lights, taking out some. I dove-rolled over and ran past the front of the house, heading for the exit. Auto fire tack-tack-tacked in random succession, following close behind me. 'Jerry's' voice screeched like all hell was coming, but it wasn't at me.

"You idiots, what the devil did I tell you, don't shoot at him in front of the house! I only put a deposit down on it! Budala! You think money comes from thin air! Chase him away from the house!"

I was screwed, and royally so goddamnit! I'd let my anger get to me, giving them the advantage. I made a quick run across the lawn as 'Jerry' and his crew started their trucks. The sound of uncut green grass and wet leaves crunched under my sneaker-like boots. I shot the Mack back as I was running. Looks easier in the movies than it actually is. Damn duffle around my neck was moving in tandem, beating against my chest.

I made it back to the 3000GT. Key, ignition, foot to pedal, and I was spitting dirt and loose rock with all four wheels. I took a quick look out the rearview. Eight headlights that switched to two pair were following at a close distance-then the rearview stopped being useful and the back window became a passing thought as it flew off and back. The slight rain stopped. Then as I came to highway 70, the sky opened up, and a sheet of rain drenched everything in sight. I wound up the windows, though it made little difference to the back seat. Have to get it reupholstered when I get out of this. I may have screwed up on this, but I was not out of the game yet. I got a good lead and decided to take the sonofabitches head on, so I slammed on the breaks, stopping dead a half mile from the bridge going over Sliver Lake. Took out the Mack-Ten, couple of grenades, and lit them mutha's up something close to hell on earth!

Took out the first truck black Escalade, blowing the hood off and sending it over the roof. It slid sideways, causing the others to stop crisscrossing out the way trying not to hit each other. I emptied three clips into that damn truck, jumped into the 3000GT, and roared off.

Rain splattered. The transmission ran through gears at a high rev. I had made it to the middle of the bridge when a second double set of headlights came straight at me from both sides of the highway. The sounds of trucks came from 'Jerry's' position. His voice came loud and clear as the bullets flew from the new trucks direction.

"Good try Moses. You would have gotten away if I weren't prepared for this. Your choices are few. Better decide now. You are coming up fast on my men and they won't let you go so easily. What now?"

Oh, He thinks I've no choice? That he had me by the balls and I was gonna get gunned down in the rain by some hitter I don't even know?! To hell with this! I turned wide, into a half circle, flooring the 3000GT off through the metal guard with a metal on fiberglass wrench, flying into the air, aiming into Silver Lake.....

I hit the three switches on the steering column, and zipped up the duffle. Both doors and the trunk flew open with a 'floop' and we hit the water. An on-rush of freezing cold smacked me in the face and washed into the missing rear window. The car sunk quickly. I held on to the wheel, letting the car take me deep so to avoid any gunfire. Everything not waterproof was thrown into the duffle.

I started to swim a ways down for three minutes, which was my limit for breath holding. I came up a few feet from the bridge. 'Jerry' was standing with his megaphone,

"Nice! I'd expect no different from you, Moses. I did my research well. This isn't over my friend, oh no, this is just the beginning. When you get yourself together, come looking for me. You're the Detective, detect! I'll be waiting, and I'll send friends just to help you out!"

.....what the hell's going on? I floated along with the current, thinking. I needed more than just me for this thing. I needed more than just weapons, I needed more *Gunns!*

-- To be continued --