

**Murder Jan Wrote**

Short Story

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An autumn haze had long since been replaced by a warm October sun as I drove home from the post office after lunch. It was great to have a day off from my duties as a State Police officer. The maple leaves swirled in the dust up ahead chasing each other in an endless game. I powered down my window and let the breeze caress my hair.

Just about a mile from my home, I noticed someone wearing a green army jacket walking along the country road. A strap across his back held a high powered rifle with a scope. It appeared odd to me that he was not wearing the required fluorescent orange, or a hunting license displayed on the middle of his back.

While these thoughts flitted through my mind, he apparently heard the sound of my vehicle, turned, and looked directly at me. He appeared to be in his late 20's. Black curly hair fell down over his ears, and his olive-colored face was partially covered with an unruly beard. My eyes were drawn to the huge red stains covering the front of his jacket and on the sleeves. *Blood! Dear God, it looks like blood!*

Before, I could react; he raised the rifle and stepped onto the road in front of me. My foot instinctively found the brake as the car skidded to a stop just inches from him. My hands clutched the steering wheel as if paralyzed. The man walked to my passenger door and attempted to open it. It was locked. Keeping the rifle aimed at me, he cursed and shouted:

“Open this dam door, or I’ll blow your freaking head off! Now!”

I fumbled with the door lock and finally managed the release as well as closing my window. He seemed to pause for a second as if to consider where to sit; then opened the back door and climbed inside. I felt the cold metal of the rifle as he pressed it against the side of my face.

“Drive!”

My voice came out in a hoarse squeak, “Where to?”

“Turn right and head east toward Raleigh. Stay off the Interstate, I’ll tell you where to turn.”

My mind went into overdrive as I tried to think of a scenario where I could get away from him.

“Just take my car and let me out.”

“Shut up and just drive!”

Again, I felt the cold barrel of the rifle dig into my cheek.

*Dear Lord, Please help me know what to say to him to convince him to let me go.*

“Please let me go. You don’t want to do this.”

The rifle dug deeper into my face.

“You freaking people don’t know when to shut up do you? You would save yourselves a whole lot of grief if you just knew when to keep your mouths shut. Now step on it, and if you don’t want me to shoot you right now, don’t speak unless I ask you something.”

I heard him mumbling to himself. “If he would have just kept his mouth shut, I wouldn’t have had to kill him. How did he think I would react when he ordered me off his property? That little piss-ant grandson of his trying to defend him against me. I wasn’t about to leave and let him take all those drugs that we had stashed.”

*Dear God, He’s killed two people already. He will never let me go now that I’ve seen his face and basically heard his confession. I’ve got to look for a way to get away from him.*

Nothing in my police training had prepared me for this. I was in my private car without radio or a gun. Just about then, I noticed the blinking red light on my gas gauge.

“Can I say something?”

“WHAT?”

“I’ve got to stop for gas at the next station. The red light is on and we are running out of gas.”

“Okay, but don’t try any funny business. I’ll have you lined up in my scope. I’ll pick you off like a beer can on a fence post.”

I shoved my hand into my coat pocket where I kept my phone. *No, I can’t risk him hearing me dial or the voice of the 911 operator.*

We both noticed the gas station at the same time, and he said, “Over there!”

I turned off the highway, and pulled into the station. *This would be my only chance. He couldn’t get out of the car and hold the gun on me as I stood at the gas pump as someone was bound to see him. I would have to take my chances or die trying.*

“One false move and I’ll blast you to smithereens.” He hissed.

The gas tank was on my side of the car, and he was sitting on the opposite side. I selected the pumps closest to the building and pulled over.

“Move over there!”

He pointed to the last pump furthest away from the station door. I pulled over, grabbed my purse, slung it over my shoulder and got out. There were three tanks in a row with a space between them which looked large enough for a person to squeeze through. I opened the cover on the car’s gas tank, and bent over to take the nozzle from the pump, threw it on the pavement, and after squeezing between the gas tanks took off running in a zig-zag pattern toward the store.

Bullets whizzed over my head and one struck a gas pump I had just passed. Flames erupted as the tank exploded. The blast propelled me into the air and deposited me near the front

door of the station. I was stunned and passed out. When I came too, people were shouting and running around. Pumper trucks had arrived along with the EMT's from the local fire station, and they were spraying foam on the burning tank and spilled gasoline. Someone was trying to talk to me about my injuries, and I struggled to speak.

My police training kicked in and I gasped: "Dangerous man. Murdered two people; he kidnapped me and took my car... HO2991 silver Nissan." I gave in to the relief of darkness which enveloped me.

The next thing that I remembered was an overwhelming pain radiating from my leg. An oxygen mask had been placed over my mouth, and an IV in my arm. I heard the wail of the ambulance as they transported me to the hospital. I was in and out of the fog which descended on my brain. When we arrived at the hospital, I was alert enough to sign permission for them to set and treat the burns on my leg.

I awoke in the recovery room with the nurse prodding me and saying that it was time to wake up. I didn't want to leave the dark recesses of my mind where I knew nothing. Reality hit me hard when I remembered what had happened. Fear overwhelmed my heart and I struggled to get up. The nurse kept saying, "You're safe; it's alright." I finally calmed down. Still under the effects of the anesthesia, I didn't feel the overwhelming pain from the injuries to my leg until later.

At nine o'clock that night my partner, Detective Brian Smith, from the local State Police barracks, came into my room and asked me if I was up to answering some questions. I nodded and he sat down in a chair beside my bed.

"I am so sorry that this happened to you Jan. How are you feeling?"

"Better, I think. It's hard to tell."

“We found your car abandoned in Asheboro. The manager of the gas station gave us a description of the man and license number of your car. Who was that man and why was he trying to kill you?”

I managed to tell him what I knew. His face changed when I told him about what the man had been mumbling in the back seat; he left the room suddenly to make a call. He returned later to tell me the police had dispatched a couple of cars to the area where the suspect had commandeered my car with me in it. In the meantime, they were going to try to get some DNA from my car to help in identifying him. “Did anyone else drive your car in the past week? And, do you know what type of gun he had?”

“I’m the only one who drives my car. The gun was a high-powered hunting rifle with a scope. He was carrying it by a black leather strap which contained a row of bullets. I’m sorry that’s all I know about the gun.”

He took a DNA swab, put it in an evidence bag, and said he would be back to see me again in a couple of days. They would need me to testify as to what I knew when they had him in custody.

“We will find him, and he will pay for what he has done.”

I was startled the next evening to see a photo of my kidnapper, Owen Green, on the local news. He was not only my kidnapper, but in a drug induced frenzy he had killed two people and was on the run. I prayed they would catch him quickly. I did not like the idea that he had access to my car and could have easily looked up my address on the registration before abandoning it.

Progress was slow as the burns healed and my leg strengthened, I stayed in the rehabilitation center. After six weeks, they figured I could go home and do outpatient therapy. I was not prepared mentally to be alone. I asked my friend, Ruth, a fellow officer, to stay with me

at night for a couple of weeks. She agreed and brought her own pistol and ammunition. I shuddered at the thought that one of us might have to use our guns.

*Surely, he would be long gone out of the State by now, wouldn't he?* We would have to be vigilant at all times until he was caught.

A couple of weeks later, Ruth took me for my checkup and I was released to continue therapy on my own. When we returned to the house, we made the decision that she would go back home since I was much stronger and able to take care of myself.

As a celebration meal of my independence, I made a meatloaf and scalloped potatoes for dinner. Then, I called the office at the State Police barracks in Burlington to see if there was any progress in finding Owen Green. The news was not encouraging. They reported that he had been spotted somewhere near Asheboro, but that had been a week ago. They had checked out the lead, but were unable to find any trace of him.

That evening when I prepared for bed, I checked all the doors and windows twice. I did something that I always do in a hotel. I put a chair under the doorknobs. If someone picked the lock and tried to force the door open, it would make a lot of noise if the chair fell. I also wedged sticks of wood between the window panes of the downstairs windows so they would not slide up. That being done, I fell into bed exhausted.

Around two o'clock in the morning I was awakened by a thud. *Was I dreaming?* I listened intently and I heard the noise again. Someone had managed to knock over my chair. Grabbing my phone, I dialed 911, identified myself and asked to have the State Police come as I had an intruder. Alerting them also, that I believed it was the man who had murdered our neighbors and kidnapped me two months ago. I locked my bedroom door, and then pushed the dresser up against it. My 38 semi-automatic was in the night stand; I took it out and stepped into

the closet. If he managed to shoot through the door and push his way into the room, I would have the opportunity to take him down from the crack in the partially open closet door. The steps creaked a couple of times, so I knew he was almost to the top step. My heart thudded in my chest and perspiration trickled down my face and back. *Dear Lord, Help me to be calm.*

Doors were banged open to other rooms; I heard him say: "I know you're in here, and when I find you, I'm going to blow your head off."

He was outside my door turning the knob, then attempting to kick it down. I heard a shot and a bullet flew into my pillow with a thud. He was shooting through the lock. Now the dresser was being shoved forward as he attempted to gain entrance.

"Don't come in here; I have a gun, and, I will shoot you!"

He paused for a minute as if to absorb my words. Then a volley of shots peppered my comforter. It was then that I heard the sirens. Help had arrived. I heard him curse and then the pounding of his feet as he ran down the stairway.

I pushed the dresser aside and stepped out into the hall. It was definitely Owen Green, and He was sprinting down the hallway toward the back door. I opened the window and yelled:

"Detective Jan Smith here; he's coming out the back. Someone cover the back."

Quickly, I pulled my head back in less they should think that I was the intruder.

After slipping into a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt, I ran for the steps. I heard shouting outside.

"We've got him Detective. Come on out."

There he stood in handcuffs, the man who had kidnapped me and tried unsuccessfully to kill me twice. As I looked at his youthful face, all I could think was: Thank God we got you.



Now I can sleep again. He looked at me with so much hate that I almost crumbled at the evil in his voice as he cursed and swore at me.

I fired back at him. “You brought this on yourself. You killed innocent people who did nothing but make the mistake of being kind to you – giving you a place to stay, feeding you and treating you like family. And the reward for them was that they had to die?”

“Shut your freaking mouth. You don’t know anything.”

“I guess I do know something. You’re going away for a long time and you may even get the death penalty. I actually feel sorry for your soul. I pray to God you come to know him while you are in prison. That’s your only hope of redemption.”

Then turning to my fellow officers, I thanked them for their prompt response and for having my back.

“Thanks again, you kept me from having to kill or be killed. I’ll be down in the morning to file the paper work. Be careful out there. Have a safe night.”

Owen. Green turned his head and spat in my direction as they were leading him to the car.

My heart felt only sorrow for the devastation of the human spirit brought on by his addiction to alcohol and drugs—a life ruined.

I secured my doors downstairs and walked slowly upstairs to my room, looked inside at the bullet riddled pillow and bed and promptly headed for the guest room. I had a feeling that it would be a long time before sleep came.

The End