

## The Last Stand of an American Bigot

By

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He called himself Toby, after that guy that wrote all those fiercely "American" songs. He was 47, and he'd seen plenty in his time. 'Nam. The assassination of a dissident. The rise of what he felt was an inferior race. The impeachment of a great man.

He'd never caused trouble a day in his life. He'd worked at the Post Office, at the local hardware store, he'd worked for the people that had helped build this great city. This great country. He'd done his time with them, and he'd done it proudly.

He was an American. Born and raised.

He'd watched as his neighborhood had gone to shit. As the dealers had come in. The ones that preyed on the innocent. He'd done his part at community meetings to raze them from the city he was proud to live in. He'd made his voice heard, along with the voices of the neighborhood he'd grown to be a part of.

They did their part to insure that the cit kept their streets safe. Wholesome. American.

Although Toby had never served in the United States military, he made damn sure the boys down at the local VFW knew how proud of them he was. For what they'd done. He bought them drinks. He bought them smokes. He bought them another night of forgetting.

They'd raised the towers in the early '70's as a beacon of light. A home for the newfound yuppies, who wanted to live closer to the burgeoning city. The former hippies who'd come around to seeing the American Dream for themselves. Who wanted their piece of the pie.

The '80's and the recession saw the towers fall. Not to the ground, but close enough. Where any old schmoe off the street who made \$100 a week could afford a place. Hell, \$100 a month could get you a two-bedroom.

The '90's saw the towers sink even lower into the muck. It saw them go underground. Saw the sewer rats stick their heads up and claim their piece. Their piece of the sky.

And he fought them. He fought the dealers and the addicts. He fought them at community meetings and in City Hall. He stood up to them, with his neighborhood at his back. And they drove them out with the power of solidarity.

He did his part and made his neighborhood, his towers, into his piece of the sky. He helped make it theirs again. The Neighborhoods.

And then the city turned against them. The fucking liberals, with their lofty ideals and their laissez-faire attitude let a bunch of immigrants into the neighborhood. Into the towers he'd fought so hard to win back. And then those same fucking liberals went back to their million dollar mansions in the suburbs and left him to get by on his own.

And those fucking liberals said things like "This is their America, too. This is our America" and didn't bother to see what it did to the neighborhood. How it split it all up. How it tore the neighborhood apart.

Like those fucking liberals knew what America was. Like they'd served their country. Like they'd sat with those boys at the VFW and learned the true heart of an American warrior. An American hero.

And so Toby found himself living in a hodge podge of "other" cultures. A hodge podge of anything but American culture. And they told him to eat this shit with a grin on his face. To lap it up by the spoonful like it was the best damn pudding he'd ever had.

Fuck that.

That's all Toby thought, day and night. Fuck that. He saw what was going on. Food he'd never imagined became the norm on his street. Words he couldn't come close to deciphering were spat at him every day as he walked down his streets.

And the bars he'd grown old with? They sat empty. The victim of religious intolerance. These new neighbors

didn't drink. They didn't believe in it. It was against their religion.

When did God ever say it wasn't all right to throw a few back on a Friday night?

Fuck that.

His neighborhood was crumbling all around him. Falling into bits and pieces that he couldn't even begin to recognize. The businesses he knew and loved falling prey to men who couldn't even understand him. They couldn't even understand fucking English! The American language, for Christ's sake!

And so he bought some guns. Lots of guns. It was surprisingly easy. Nobody even asked any questions. He was a good, upstanding citizen after all. A pillar of the community. Maybe he just wanted to make a display case of several semi-automatic handguns. To show his American grandkids. How were they to know he hadn't even had a date in over twenty years? He'd earned his right to bear arms, and fuck if anyone was going to stand in his way.

He prepared for over a year. Drew schematics. Plans of attack. What it was exactly that he wanted to do.

He was going to be ready. It didn't matter that all his planning would fall apart, fall prey to his rage. He was meticulous. Exacting. He thought he was cold and calculating, like he needed to be. Cold from all that had been done to him and his neighborhood. Calculating because he was better than they were. Smarter.

He was ready.

When he walked into that square, in-between all those buildings that rose up to the heavens, in the middle of everything he'd grown to hate, he laughed to himself. Everyone around him was wondering what this old white man was doing there instead of wondering why there were so many sharp points protruding from his jacket.

They didn't even notice when he drew the first two pistols. They were so stuck on his face and wondering hwat the fuck he was doing there, in their place.

He took aim and fired the first shot of his own personal war.

Blam!

A seven year old girl that would grow up to meet, fall in love with and marry the greatest American poet to ever live fell to the ground, a bullet in her brain. The great American poet that was meant to meet her would kill himself two years before writing the poem that would change a generation, never having found a reason to live.

Blam!

A future state representative that would help to integrate the diverse cultures of the neighborhood, the city itself, fell to the ground, dead before he ever hit the ground.

Blam!

A pick-pocket and petty thief that would end up stabbing a couple to death in three years let out his last breath as the bullet pierced both of his lungs.

Blam!

A man who was saving money so that his sister's children could come to live a better life fell to the ground, spilling his life out all over the concrete. His sister would never find out what happened to him, and two of her four children would die within the next two years.

Blam!

Blam!

Blam...

Five guns and twelve deaths later (thirteen, counting Toby himself who would die on the operating table after being shot seven times by police officers, arriving far too late to the scene), the shooter lay on top of two his kills, coughing up his blood and his dreams onto the paramedics trying to save him. They found a picture of his mother and a ticket to the '76 republican campaign party in his breast pocket, strangely free of blood.

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