

Dodging Bullets

By Ric Lynch

I worked long hours trying to pay for my college education. I went to school from 7 am to noon. From 1pm to 5 pm I worked in a lumber yard, or in the woods pulling logs up and down hills driving a tractor. From 6pm to 9 pm I sold shoes in a downtown shoe store, my least favorite job, and drove a cab from 9pm until fares stopped calling.

One slow weekday night while I was sitting in a cab, my dispatcher called my number and said, "Fare waiting on University Drive bound for undetermined address off highway 321W. You want it?"

"Sure," I replied, calculating it would be just another fare, expecting it to be my last one of a slow night. Boy was I wrong.

A dark figure in the night waved me down as I pulled up to the address, quickly hopping in the back. He smelled strongly of cigarette smoke and liquor, and in the mirror I saw he was dressed in dark clothing, a hoodie up, with a baseball cap pulled down to his eyebrows.

"Where to I asked him," without turning around.

In a heavy Kentucky twang, not unusual in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the dark figure told me, "Don't know the address, but I know where it is, and I can direct you as we go south on 31W, but I want to hit a drive through liquor store first."

"No problem," I told him, "I know one on the way."

I took University to 31 W and turned right to head south and shortly turned into a drive through liquor lane, stopping the cab with the rear window of the cab at the store window.

"A six pack of Bud," the fare gruffly told the clerk in the window. The clerk produced the beer, took a bill and returned the change.

I pulled back onto 31W and headed south telling the fare, "Let me know when to turn."

"It is about 5 miles down after we pass the Interstate. I'll tell you where," he tersely replied.

Within minutes he became agitated and fidgety. I had an ominous feeling when he reached over my seat to place the sixpack next to me. It was then I felt the knife at my neck.

"Don't do nothing stupid, and drink that sixpack as quick as you can," he barked in a low voice.

I adjusted the rearview mirror to check out the knife in his hand which appeared to be a large hunting knife, sparking brightly from the headlights of oncoming cars. Irrationally, I thought that a beer sounded pretty good in my present predicament. I quickly chugged the first beer, burped loudly, and the realization that I was in mortal danger sunk in fully.

“Do another one, now,” he screamed, nearly breaking my right eardrum as his boozy breath hit my nostrils!

I finished the second beer a little slower with him yelling the whole time. “Drink faster!”

The two beers helped bring the adrenalin down a bit, and I tried to reason my way to survival. I looked at the huge radio, about two feet by two foot in the center of the dash and devised a plan.

After about ten minutes the yelled, “Next right.”

I turned into Richpond Rockfield Road and waited for his next instructions.

We had just passed the Rockfield Baptist Church when the fare said, “Next right.”

“Keep drinking,” he growled, but I had another idea.

I gradually went faster and faster until I was well over 70 miles per hour on a dark two-lane road when he yelled, “Slow down!” I did.

I jumped on the brake with both feet, grabbed his knife wrist with my left hand, and drove my right elbow into his nose as forcefully and I could. Bright red blood spurted over the radio giving me an idea for my next move. My elbow shot had snapped his head back, knocking his hat off and dislodging the hoodie from his head. I grabbed a large hunk of unruly hair and smashed his face repeatedly into the sturdy radio until his body went limp. A wave of relief ran over me as I retrieved the knife from the floor and tossed it out of the open window. I stared at the limp body laying over the front seat as I reached for the radio to call in my perilous situation. Before I was able to key the mike, I heard the cocking of a revolver and felt the cold metal barrel against my left temple.

“Hurt my buddy anymore and you are going to get a bullet in the brain,” quietly and calmly said the accomplice. I now realized there were two of them, and his buddy had been following us. His calmness scared me more than the ranting of his partner, now stirring on the front seat with his legs dangling into the back.

“Help him get into my truck, now,” the slow gruff voice commanded.

The first robber stumbled with my aid to his partner's truck. When we got there, he had recovered enough to realize the blood covering his shirt was because of me. He became combative and tried to punch me. He was so weak he was not inflicting much damage, and I exaggerated my response, hoping his partner would not join in. With robber number two still holding the revolver on me, he ordered me to the front of my cab, watching me through the windshield as he pulled wires from under the dash, disabling both my cab and the radio.

"Give me all you cash," he growled.

I emptied my pockets, hoping he would not ask for the box under my seat. He did not.

"Stay put for 15 minutes before you head out to report this," he calmly said, "We have a police radio and will know if you don't do like I said."

With robber number one slumping in the passenger seat, robber number two drove the getaway vehicle, an old Ford pickup with gray primer paint. I slumped behind the cab for cover as the truck sped down the dark road in the same direction we had been going.

I quickly went to the radio, and with minutes reconnected enough wires to contact my dispatcher and report the robbery. I gave a clear, accurate position of the dark country road, with no farmhouse lights nearby, south of Bowling Green.

I saw headlights approaching me from the direction my cab was headed. I stood in the middle of the road, jumping up and down in a desperate attempt to stop the car. But it wasn't a car. It was an old Ford truck painted gray. The robbers had hit a dead end and turned around heading back to me.

As I bolted into a cornfield shots began thundering into the night. I hear my Dad's voice in my ears, "Zigzag, do not run away in a straight line from a shooter."

I really could hear bullets zinging by. My Dad kept talking to me, "A revolver has six shots. Count the shots."

I did. Everything seemed to be happening in slow motion. I had heard three shots so far, and with a second between shots, I heard the last three and fell onto the ground, daring to raise my head. I rubbed my hands all over my body feeling for wet blood. Nothing. I had literally dodged a bullet, or six.

The Ford truck sped down road, and off in the distance I could see the blue lights of a Warren County Sheriff car coming to the rescue. They had those dirty birds in sight. The bad guys turned right on Richmond Rockfield Road, and with the description I had given to my dispatcher, the Sheriff car was right on the bad guy's tail.

I told my dispatcher, “They got em! I can’t get the cab rewired. Send me a wrecker please.”

“On the way,” she replied, ‘You OK?’

“Yeah,” I told her, “But I think I’ll have another one of those beers while I wait.

Maybe selling shoes is not that bad after all.