



SHOCK

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A sharp blast pierces my ears and pulls me out of sleep. The ringing in my ears is too strong to hear myself shout out. Suddenly, I realize the vertical blinds are damaged and something was thrown inward. I look over at the wife and see she is awake and propped up in bed by her elbows. She is looking at me with a look of confusion and fear. The soft light of the early morning entering our bedroom in wavering beams. The blinds sway, sending ever changing rays of light into the bedroom.

Bullets start tearing through the blinds and walls. Our mattress and box spring are currently lying on the floor. We put the frame in the closet because when we fucked it squeaked loud enough for the baby to hear down the hallway. If it weren't for that recent change, some of the bullets entering the room would have hit us.

As the solid ringing tone in my ears starts lowering and my hearing begins returning, I shift myself sideways and off the bed. I see my wife start exiting the bed towards her side. I lunge forward and grab her shirt and pajamas. In one solid motion I pull her across the bed and onto the floor next to me. The glass door to the walk in closet and the mirror in the bathroom are shattering as bullets continue getting fired into the room.

"Second," I say, realizing I can't hear myself and am sure she can't hear me. She presses herself against the floor as flat as she can as I get on my feet. I try to keep my body as low as I can while I slip one foot between her and the bed. She wiggles to allow me the room as I shift all my weight to that foot and kneel as low as I can get. I twist and push both hands inward against the center of the side of the box spring. In a fast motion I then lift up and push with my legs. The box spring and mattress lift up onto their side as I point to the closet. I lean forward so my lips are right next to my wife's ears.

"Get in there and under the blanket pile. Lie flat." I command quickly in the loudest whisper I can muster. She carefully and quickly crawls over the glass and through the frame of the closet door. I see her squirm under the blankets and start flattening herself out as I make a dash to the bedroom door.

Throwing open the door I look down the hallway. The hallway before me is roughly twenty feet long before it turns to the right. The left side of the hallway makes a 90 degree turn where the right side turns at 45 degrees. The small wall on the right spans about six feet before another 45 degree turn evens it out with the rest of the hallway. That six foot wall is the first thing you see when entering the front door.

The six foot wall is both the first thing you see when entering the apartment from the front door, and the I make out shadows on the floor indicating someone moving away from the elbow and towards the living room. I dash down the hallway and hope the shotguns on the rack at that elbow are still there.

I stop quickly, even though I'm in socks, and look directly at the shotgun rack. With no surprise, the shotgun rack is empty. I look down the hall and into the living room and dining room, seeing a man carrying three shotguns in his arms. He is wearing heavy, tight fitting black clothing and a black combat helmet I've never seen before. He is quickly scrambling towards the door onto the porch that attaches to our bedroom.

I run into the dining room and pick up a heavy glass cactus which is sitting on an end table near the doorway. I throw it at the man carrying my shotguns as hard as I can. It makes contact with the center of his back just as he gets within arm's reach of the open doorway. I hear gunfire pause as he drops the shotguns and falls to the ground.

I dash to his side as he tries to pick the shotguns back up. Only one of the shotguns is loaded. Being the only one that knows which one, I grab it and forcefully remove it from his possession. As he turns to see who threw the object at him, he realizes I am now pointing said shotgun at him.

I see his lips move as one of his arms raise up as I cock the shotgun and pull the trigger. His shoulder and raising arm blow free from his body as his eyes and mouth open wide. I clear the chamber and load the next round knowing he isn't going to be a problem, then turn and run with my shotgun back into the hallway. I hear him cry out just before the gunfire resumes for several shots.

At the elbow of the hallway I lean to look back into the bedroom. The walls between the bedroom and the closet, as well as the bedroom and the bathroom, are heavily damaged. The gunfire ceases entirely as I hear multiple footsteps entering the apartment from the porch. Several are entering the bedroom and a few are coming in through the living room.

I take count in my head and realize there are only 5 rounds left in my shotgun. I turn to avoid being seen by the people entering the bedroom and lean to look down the hall into the living room. I see another man in the same black uniform. I take aim and fire as his head begins turning towards me. The blast hits the top of his chest and the front of his helmet, blowing the face plate off and taking most of the skin off of his face. I notice he is carrying a small machine gun with an extended magazine. I keep my shotgun raised, clearing the chamber and loading the next round.

I step quickly towards the second man as a third comes into view, already pointing his weapon in my direction. I immediately jump backwards as bullets barely miss me. The moment I land I lean forward and to the side, firing on him. The blast shreds his hands and forearms, causing him to drop his weapon. He moves around as if he is immediately disoriented, trying to grab his weapon before it hits the ground. The only thing he manages to do is knock it a little closer to me.

Clearing the chamber and loading the next round I understand I am down to three remaining. I also realize the shot I took while leaning strained some muscles in my back and sides. No time to worry about that now. I quickly approach the two men bleeding in my living room and hear gunfire in the bedroom. Rage fills me as I pick up the man's weapon. His heavily damaged and now functionless hands rub against his helmet, trying to remove it. I remove his weapon, then use it to bash the side of his helmet several times.

I observe another man entering from the porch. I toss the machine gun several feet away as he turns his head towards me and raises his weapon. Shotgun in hand I turn and sprint into the hallway, barely avoiding the line of fire as he opens up on me. He unloads his magazine. I hear him pop it out and have a little trouble loading the replacement, so I lean around and blast him in the chest. I lay my shotgun down and run to him as he lands on the ground. I raise my leg up and kick him in the face of the mask repeatedly until he stops moving. I pull his machine gun off of him and head back to my shotgun. I raise my shotgun with one hand, trying to hold it steadily pointed in front of me. I continue around the bend in the hallway and down towards the bedroom. Another black clad individual is exiting the bathroom towards the exit which is just beyond where I last saw the blinds swaying in the morning light.

He doesn't turn his head in a way that I believe he can see me through his helmet, so I proceed towards the bedroom. Directly behind him, another black clad individual is following. His head is facing in my direction as my finger squeezes the trigger on the shotgun.

The barrel of the shotgun rises as the shot rings out. I feel lucky the blast takes his left arm off. As I close the space between him and I, his forward momentum acquires a rapid descent to the floor. I

drop the M4 just outside the bedroom as I clear the chamber of my shotgun and load the next round. Entering the bedroom and turning my sights to the left I raise the shotgun and pull the trigger as the first man I saw exiting the bathroom is swiveling around. The blast sends red mist into the air as both of his arms go limp, quickly followed by the rest of his body.

I hear a sound behind me, towards the bathroom, and turn around. Clearing the chamber and loading my last round I feel a bullet tear into my right shoulder, followed quickly by the very edge of my left side. I hear multiple shots fired and hear them narrowly missing me. I see him bracing himself as the barrel of my shotgun is pointed at him. He continues pulling the trigger, but is now out of rounds. My final round takes off his head, now limp body falling to the floor.

I turn back around to look out of the bedroom at the porch they entered through. A section of the stone railing on the porch has been crushed inward and a large armored vehicle is parked several feet back. It is clear they rammed the railing before opening fire on the bedroom. I drop my shotgun and move as fast as I can back through the doorway to the M4 I left on the ground.

Picking up the M4 I release the extended magazine. I count twenty rounds remaining before replacing it in the weapon. I check and find a round chambered as I assure myself the safety is off. Raising the M4 and resting the butt of the weapon against my right shoulder I remember I had just been shot. Pushing the pain out of my mind, I quickly travel back down the hall and turn the corner. As I do this, I hear a diesel engine revving.

I check that there are no threats in the living room and dining room as I get back to the porch just in time to watch the armored vehicle tearing backwards through the rocks and sidewalk outside my apartment. I notice various people watching from their windows as I turn to go back into the apartment. I jog through making sure the kitchen, second bathroom and spare bedroom are clear. With fear in my heart I check our daughter's bedroom and find her awake in her crib, eyes wide and terror on her face. She's frozen and silent, thankfully. I scoop her up and hold her close to me with my left arm as I lower the M4 in my right.

Carrying her, I jog out of her room into the hallway and down to the bedroom. I drop the M4 just inside the bedroom and use my free hand to cover my daughter's eyes as I enter the closet. The blankets are now against the wall of the closet and I see a lot of blood. What I don't see is my wife.

I turn and run out of the closet, around the corner and into the bathroom. I look in the shower hoping that she somehow repositioned herself while evading them, but it is empty. I feel rage and deep sadness flood me as I try and fight it back. I kiss my daughter on the top of her head and exit the bathroom. I kneel down and pick up the M4. I lay the rifle and my daughter down on the bed, now returned to the floor. Though there are several bullet holes through the mattress, my daughter and the M4 rest comfortably as I quickly get pants out of my dresser and pull them on. I grab the usual contents of my pockets from the top of the dresser and place them in the appropriate locations. Smartphone in my front left pocket, pen, keys, and pocket knife in my front right pocket, check. Wallet in my rear left pocket, check.

I run into the closet and check for my stash of shotgun shells inside the security electronics box. I am thankful to find they are still there. I grab the box and head back into the bedroom, stepping once again over the motionless fellow lying just outside the bathroom and set the box of shells next to my baby and the rifle. I run down the hallway and grab my black duffel bag out of the linen closet and return to the bedroom. All the while I am looking in every room I pass, gladly finding them all void of threatening people.

I drop the duffel bag on the foot of the bed opposite the baby. I then spend a couple minutes running around the apartment taking the magazines out of every M4. I also find full magazines in the gear of some of the men.

“We’re going to fucking kill you,” the man whose hands and weapon I heavily damaged just before heading back down the hallway barks at me in a raspy voice. I lay the collected magazines down on the ground by my feet and jog over to the glass cactus I knocked the guy down with earlier. I pick it up and jog back to the raspy voiced fellow.

“Like fuck you are,” I howl, sounding like I’m already crying though I am currently not. I swing the glass object at him, leaning forward to throw my weight behind it as it descends. It makes a loud cracking sound across his helmet, causing his whole body to go limp.

I drop the cactus on him and gather the magazines before sprinting down the hallway, back into the bedroom. I drop the magazines on the floor next to the duffel bag. I open the bag, slip the M4 into it then toss the magazines on top. I grab my shotgun, quickly disassemble it enough to get the barrel off and throw the parts into the bag. I zip up the bag and throw it over my right shoulder, once again reminded I have been shot there.

I pick up my daughter who is watching me with the same terror from earlier and a hint of wonder. I turn and run down the hallway to just beyond the elbow where the front door is still closed. I unlock it and open it, now hearing sirens approaching. Neighbors across the way are asking me questions but I only hear buzzing in my mind. Ignoring them I leave the door open behind me and run down the sidewalk towards where my car is parked.

As I approach my car I try to look between the buildings where the armored car was backing, hoping to see damage on the ground which would indicate the direction it’s going. I think I see some indentations as if it kept going between the buildings, towards the rear center parking lot. I get to my car, a new model black Infinity with near black tinted windows, fully black rims and body trim and even a black satellite radio antenna, and throw my duffel bag in the rear seat behind the driver’s side.

I run around the car and get my daughter into her car seat on the passenger side, then close her door. I close the driver side rear door as I open the driver door and climb in. I start the car and throw it in reverse. I pull out and shift too fast to drive, causing a sound I never want to hear to come from the transmission. Slamming the gas I tear through the parking lot and make a hard left toward the front gate.

As I approach the front gate I see the exit gate slowly closing. People from the office are standing on the sidewalk with hands over their mouths. One of them sees my car nearing the gate quickly, flying over speed bumps. She raises her hand and points east. As the gate reopens I launch myself out onto the busy street and fire down the street to the east.

Every intersection I tear through, some of which having red lights for the direction I’m traveling, I carefully and quickly look both ways, hoping to see the armored car. Six blocks later to the east I spot the rear of what must be the same armored car. Police fly by me on the opposite side of the street, rushing towards where I came from. I check my video display mounted off the side of the dash near my glove box which shows the camera view of my daughter in her car seat. She looks strangely content and even a little happy. This makes my dread lower slightly.

Weaving through traffic, the armored car somehow seems to be gaining ground away from me. As soon as I observe this, the car makes a sharp right turn into a small business park. What feels like years pass by as I make it to where the vehicle made the turn and follow its lead. I see a sideways sliding chain link fence gate closing and gun it. There is no way I am going to make it through the gate before it closes. But I also know there is no way the gate will stop my car from continuing forward.

I hear the loud snap and various scraping sounds as the gate opens itself around my car. I hear a continued grinding sound from under my car as I drive into some sort of storage lot. A couple dozen feet in I see the tail of the armored car down a driveway next to a diagonally positioned warehouse. I slam my brakes and make the turn just barely missing a number of white barrels. I pull a u turn and drive back a bit, parking on the opposite side of racks of pipes from where the armored car is.

I look at the video monitor to see how the baby is doing and, knowing the camera is there and what it's used for, is giving it a most confused and concerned look. I smile briefly as I throw my door open and jump back just behind the rear passenger door. I open it and grab the M4 out of the duffel bag, ignoring the shotgun. I grab three magazines and put one in each rear and my front right pockets.

Raising the M4 to my shoulder, yet again reminding me I am shot, I quickly approach the armored vehicle. No sooner do I walk out from behind the cover of the racks of pipes do I hear a helicopter engine warming up. I run around some large trucks which are parked at the ends of the pipe racks and down the driveway. I keep the armored car in the M4 sights until I see the driver's door is wide open. I train the sights on the door and check the cab. No people, nor any items, remain in the cab.

I turn my gaze to just beyond the end of the driveway where it intersects with the curve of a street. A white helicopter, that looks a lot like an old modified Huey, is almost ready to lift off the ground. I train my sights on the cockpit and make out two individuals wearing the same black armor. I try to look into the rear compartment but can only make out a few of the same black helmets along with some other movement I cannot identify. I position myself just below and behind the open door to the armored vehicle and carefully target the engine compartment of the helicopter. I carefully fire the first few rounds into the rectangular access panels just behind the rotor shaft connection. I see smoke start to pour out of the exhaust as the sound of the rotors speeding up immediately begins slowing down. I fire several more shots into the motor housing, then the last eight rounds into the top length of the tail. I pop the magazine out and replace it with the one from my front right pocket.

The far side door to the cargo or passenger section of the helicopter flies open. I see three pairs of boots hit the ground. One moves forward and the other two move towards the back as I carefully fire a few shots at the feet going towards the back. With great joy I see a bullet tear through the ankle of one of the guys near the tail. He falls down and I send a couple more rounds to him, impacting his torso.

I hear shots ring out from the front of the helicopter as I see the pilot is firing through the forward section of the window in his door, shattered glass landing on the ground below. I walk as fast as I can backwards to use the bulk of the armored vehicle as cover instead of just the door. Several more shots are sent my direction before I am leaning around the rear, taking aim at two who are approaching.

I feel like I am using every last bit of energy fighting the pain of the strain from earlier when I fired a shotgun in this position. I squeeze a few rounds off at the two who are now halfway between me and the helicopter. The one who is slightly further away cuts off across the front of the armored vehicle. The one who is closer, weapon pointed directly at me, fires another two rounds. One misses completely and the second hits some trees just behind me.

I focus as hard as I can, feeling like I am squinting at a tin can several football fields away in heavy rain. I squeeze the trigger three times and realize the individual a few dozen feet in front of me is now on the ground. I quickly turn around and head to the other side of the rear of the armored vehicle.

As I lean against the back and prepare myself to lean again, different angle or not, I hear footsteps approaching down the side. I take a few steps back as quietly as I can while I grip the M4 tight against my shoulder, gritting my teeth through the pain. I have at least ten shots left in this magazine so I'm not worried about that. I just worry who will be quicker to get a good read on the other and fire first.

To my surprise, the approaching black clad M4 aiming son of a bitch keeps walking without checking directly behind the vehicle. Did they forget I was taking cover back here? I carefully put his neck directly in my sights as I see him jerk and begin to turn towards me, as if he just realized he went too far.

I squeeze the trigger, sending a round through his neck. As his rifle gets dreadfully close to being pointed at me, he falls to the ground. I run over and take the magazine from his gun, finding it only has two rounds left in it. I drop it at his side and find two full magazines in his front chest pockets and slap one into my front left pocket. I put the other sideways in my mouth and bite down, giving me a release for my pain.

I head back to the cover of the armored vehicle's driver side door. I place the pilot seat of the helicopter into my sights and realize both of the front seats are now empty. I hear three gunshots from within the helicopter and fight with every shred of my existence to stop myself from running out into the open to see if my wife is in there. I see two sets of boots hit the ground and run away from the helicopter and out of sight. I lay down into the prone position and try to see where they went. I catch their boots for a moment before they disappear up and over the far curb. I lay there for several seconds, heart pumping so hard I wonder for a moment if my whole body is bouncing each time.

Several seconds later, or twelve life times, depending on if we are looking at real time or perceived time, I slowly get back on my feet. I slowly approach the helicopter, sights generally trained on the closed rear door on the side facing me. I decide to strafe around the back of the helicopter, trying to simultaneously keep an eye on the Huey and another eye searching for the two who ran.

I hear sirens now from all directions. Some of them sound to be approaching my current location. I approach the open rear door on the far side of the helicopter from the armored car. Keeping my weapon pointed at all times into the doorway, I finally arrive. I see two bodies on the center of the floor in the rear and what looks like my wife's feet sticking out from between the two pilot's seats.

My throat closes up as I climb into the back of the Huey and hurry to the feet I can see. As soon as I can fully see into the cockpit I see blood all over the windshield. There is blood on the console and on the seats as I spot my wife's dead body on the ground between them. I fall to my knees and cry as one of the sirens I heard moments ago is now just outside this aircraft.

"Step out of the chopper with your hands in the air," I hear a female voice yell commandingly. I drop the M4 I'm carrying on the ground next to the two bodies I can now clearly see are wearing the black uniforms. I spit the magazine I had in my mouth onto them and add the magazines from my pockets to the pile.

"I'm coming out, I am unarmed," I yell, raising my arms. I wince as my right arm goes up and lean forward a little. I find that I can hold it up at a 40 degree angle and do so as I exit.

“Lay face down on the ground and put your hands behind your head,” the police woman yells while using her own door for cover, gun pointed in my direction.

“I’m shot in my shoulder, can I have one on my head and the other above my head?” I request in a returned yell, lying face down.

“Sure, yeah, do that,” she yells, stepping out from behind her door and approaching me, keeping me in her sights. I lie as directed as she approaches and pats down my back and sides with her free hand. She also pats down my legs and inner thighs. “Stand up,” she instructs, stepping back and putting her gun back on me in a more controlled fashion using both hands.

I carefully stand up and keep my arms as raised as I can get them. Suddenly several shots come from a parking lot just beyond the tree line where the two guys ran. I peer off in that direction and realize there’s a large office building of sorts. I see a row of cars around the outside edge of their property just beyond the thin tree line.

More shots ring out as the officer is now on the opposite side of the front of her police car.

“Get to cover, what are you doing standing there,” she yells at me, returning a couple shots. I hear her talking into her radio but still stand, arms mostly raised.

Suddenly I feel a sharp pain followed by numbness in my right leg. I feel a sharp pain in my stomach as I look down and see I’m being shot repeatedly. The morning sunlight dies out as I fall to the ground.

My eyes open as I hear bullets hitting glass and rock wall. I look around and realize I am still in my bedroom. Pieces of the blinds break off and join the flying glass as multiple bullets enter the room from just outside. I make out the shapes of multiple people in all black as I see the wife jerk several times. I look at her and see her eyes are open and blood is filling the bed.

“What the fuck,” I yell, losing all control of myself as my arms flail around. I remember how I flew out of my side of the bed and jumped into action in what I thought was reality and attempt to do so. What I actually do is twist myself to a diagonal position, my feet on my wife’s feet as one arm and my head now hang off the bed. I feel sharp pains in my side and legs as I realize I’m actually getting shot now.

I look over and see the front of my wife’s face is now gone, probably thanks to one of the recent bullets entering the room. I start screaming in a high pitched tone as my eyes fill with tears. I make out the shape of a black figure approaching and raising some sort of a gun. I hear shots being fired and everything goes black.