

Shooter

by Rick Marcou

The Shooter walked across the street, lit dimly by a streetlamp which cast a reflective glare off the puddled surface. No rain now, but some earlier storm left potholes filled and a pavement marbled with rivulets gleaming black or silvery. The street was quiet, just the sound of a car horn in the distance, and then a metallic grating sound, maybe a can scraped across the ground. He ignored all of this and strode forward confidently, his purpose resolute.

Decked out in black military boots, black cargo pants, dark gray and black camo multi-pocketed jacket and a black baseball cap with the Special Forces logo, worn backwards. Military goggles. Thigh-mounted knife sheath. And last but certainly not least, his AR-15, strapped around his right shoulder, which he now brought forward into shooting position as he approached the store.

The Hill Ave Deli looked like any other urban bodega, neon Open sign above the doorway, Miller Lite blinking neon in the window next to a MegaMillions sign. He approached the doorway, looked through the glass and saw only one patron, a 20-something woman in a sleeveless T with a tattoo sleeve on one arm and a barb wire tat on the biceps of the other. Spiky gelled black hair, goth makeup. He opened the door quickly and fired, taking her down in 2 shots. He turned left and saw the cashier, a late 40's Indian man, duck down and then come back up with a handgun. The first bullet hit his forehead before he could fire. The Shooter walked to the counter, peered over to make sure there was no one else hiding back there, then proceeded to the back of the store. He reached the door to the storeroom, stood to the side and pushed open the swinging door but didn't enter. Bullets sprayed through the opening into cans of tomato and pea soup on the shelves, causing red and green streams to fly out in different directions. The metal door quickly swung back closed and absorbed the remainder of the gunfire. The shooter pulled further back away, behind a shelving unit filled with potato chip bags. He grabbed a flashbang out of his left breast pocket, dropped down to the floor, pulled the pin, quickly pushed the door halfway open and tossed the flashbang into the room. He dove away back past the chip shelves. The blast was quick and loud, despite covering his ears. The blinding light flash was mostly blocked by the swinging door, but he closed his eyes and faced away and to the floor regardless. He quickly regrouped, stood up and rushed through the door, spraying bullets all over the left side of the room where he knew the shooter was located. At least the one who just shot at him. As the smoke started to clear he saw a twenty-something man lying splayed with his back against the wall, a gun on the floor next to him, blood protruding from his neck and arm.

He continued through the storeroom to the back, where he knew there was a door to the upstairs. He approached it, tried the knob, but it was locked. He stepped back, fired at the knob, it broke off. He waited a couple seconds, stepped to the side and yanked the door open.

Gunfire. As expected. He grabbed another flashbang, pulled the pin and threw it up the stairs towards the landing at the top. Same routine. Burst through the door and scaled the steps two at a time. Fired as he neared the top, not knowing where any shooters might be. Heard one loud thump as a body hit the floor to his left as he reached the landing. Kept shooting. Shots fired back hitting the wall to his right as he dropped down, trying to see below or through the smoke. He saw boots across to his left and fired, then saw the body hit the floor like a bag of rocks. He made his way across the room, knowing the goal was in the room to the far left. But not knowing how many gunmen were in there protecting it. As he got within two steps of the doorway more gunfire. He hit the deck and pulled back. Started to reach for another flashbang....

“Ethan, time to come up for dinner. End your game now.”

Game over.