

'Gunpoint' by Jamie Fansa

Gunpoint

All he had to do was pull the trigger, he would finally afford food, a house and pay off his debts, so why couldn't he do it? Beads of cold sweat trickled down his neck, his hair was drenched from the thunderous downpour that lay overhead, slowly his finger closed down on the trigger...

Four days prior.

It was dark out, yet the traffic was still bustling along, and the rain hammering down onto the pavement. James awoke to a figure standing in front of him, and in his confusion he was ready to lash out in self-defense, but luckily stopped himself just in time as he saw the blue and black jacket branded 'Police'. "Another one bugging' him along. Was it a crime to be poor?" thought James, begrudgingly, he grabbed his pot and blankets, and trudged on, down the block.

James awoke after a good night's rest, well... at least for him. James looked out into the street, seeing people enter their homes, he felt a wave of sadness, sharply followed by a rush of anger. "That one trip to the casino, the one win that ruined his life!" in his fiery rage, he lashed out at bin, sending it hurling down an alley. Finally, as James finished clearing the mess, he noticed something, a poster, as dark and uninviting as it looked, he felt it calling out to him, beckoning him closer. Upon further inspection he saw that it read "Struggling financially? High pay, no experience job offerings at 56 blank street!" As suspicious as this seemed, James thought to himself "Well, there isn't anything to lose."

Arriving at 56 blank street, he was met with a depressing sight. An overrun garden, swallowing up the fence, dark ivy creeping up the derelict building and on the rest of the house there was bleak paint peeling off the walls, shattered windows and rotting flames. A depressing sight somehow made worse by the thundering rain above, yet even this would be a dream for him. But was he even in the right place? He checked the address "Huh, no mistake." While waiting, he got lost in his own thoughts, so much so that he failed to notice the van parking next to him, the men fully dressed in black, getting out and hastily approaching him, all James felt was a sharp pain in the arm followed by the strength drain out from his muscles as he entered a dark abyss, consuming him entirely.

"Finally, the guy's coming to." Whispered a muffled voice.

"Would've been two days ago if you hadn't overdosed the sedative, you could've killed the guy!" Whispered another, angrier voice. James came to in a dark, moldy room with water dripping – rhythmically – off the ceiling. A mouse scurried across the floor.

"Where am I?" demanded James, struck with panic, he jumped up and was surprised; it worked? He wasn't bound to anything. Although he didn't dare push his luck further, not with the masked duo in front of him.

One of the men calmly replied "Take a seat, you're here for the interview?" James couldn't do anything, he obliged.

"You may be wondering what this job actually is. We are hiring people to, how should I put it... take others out for some cash." the other replied.

"What?! I'm no assassin! Please just let me..." One of the men interrupted

"The hit is 180k, or I suppose you could have a little accident..."

"F-fine I'll d-do it." James replied gloomily.

James hardly slept that night. Morning came when a bag was thrown over his head and was dragged into a van, "A great start to the day." thought James. When the van stopped, the bag was strewn off. He was given a pistol with a single bullet – That was all he would need – the weapon, capable of death with just a simple trigger was balancing in his palm, and... it felt as if the weapon was made

solely for the grasp of his hand. He was given one objective, kill the man, floor 2, room 14, he fails, he dies.

The building was a simple hotel block, flat, bleak, just standing there ominously. The men in the van had already booked him a room, floor 2 room 13, next to the target, with a fake name and card. Beads of sweat were already forming on his scalp. As he walked up to the second floor, he wondered "Could he really take a life, just to save his own?" He could still turn back. James busted open the door, no turning back now. He saw a panic-struck man, in a suit and tie, this was him, the target, the man that would fix his life whilst ending his own. But before James could fire, the man just leapt out of the window?! A scream followed. The man was desperately crawling out of the alley. After processing the scene, James hastily slid down a gutter pipe, landing with a little too much speed straight into a puddle. As he stood up, he could see his target clearly, a young man in his twenties, with his whole life ahead of him. He had brown hair, green eyes, he could see him with detail, with tears running off his face, begging to no avail.

All he had to do was pull the trigger, he would finally afford food, a house and pay off his debts, so why couldn't he do it? Beads of cold sweat trickled down his neck, his hair was drenched from the thunderous downpour that lay overhead. Slowly his finger closed down on the trigger and fired a single shot.

He was done. He couldn't bring himself to take a life. He swerved the gun to the left, missing the target by just a couple inches. By now he was out cold on the floor. He dropped the gun in a puddle, tore off his gloves into a bin. And he ran. Faster than he had deemed possible. He ran and he ran until finally, a truck at a traffic stop! He leaped in without a second thought.

Another day dawned, far from his life, just a week ago. James was still homeless, living in the gutter, and yet... he sat with a smile on his face. He had gotten a job at a local McDonalds, it isn't much, but it was honest work. He was finally getting his life together and moving up in the world.