

I Have a Gun

Tania Nyman

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- 1 I have a gun, a .38 caliber that holds five bullets. It is black with a brown handle and it stays by my bed.
- 2 I don't want a gun. I don't even like guns. But it seems I need one.
- 3 I've always believed in gun control, and the funny thing is I still do. But my gun is loaded next to my bed.
- 4 It wasn't ignorance of crime statistics that previously kept me from owning a gun. Nor was it the belief that I was immune to violence.
- 5 I thought that because I didn't believe in violence, that because I wasn't violent, I wouldn't be touched by violence. I believed that my belief in the best of human nature could make it real.
- 6 I want to believe in a world where people do not need to protect themselves from one another. But I have a gun, and it stays by my bed.
- 7 I should carry the gun from my house to my car, but I don't. What the gun is capable of, what the gun is for, still frightens me more than what it is supposed to prevent.
- 8 If I carry my gun and I am attacked, I must use it. I cannot shoot to injure. I must shoot to kill.
- 9 I have confronted an attacker not in reality but in my imagination. The man is walking down the street. To prove I am not paranoid, I lock my car and walk to my door with my house key ready.
- 10 Before I reach the steps, I think I hear a voice. "Money." Before I open the door I hear a voice. "Money." I turn to see the man with the gun.
- 11 He is frightened. I am frightened. I am frightened that I will scare him and he will shoot. I am frightened that I will give him my money and he will shoot.
- 12 I am frightened, but I am angry. I am angry because there is a gun pointed at me by someone I've never met and never hurt.
- 13 There is something that bothers me about this robbery I have created in my head. It is something that makes me uncomfortable with myself. It is something I don't want to admit, something I almost intentionally omitted because I am ashamed.

- 14 I guess I understand why I imagine being robbed by a man. They're physically more intimidating and I've never heard of anyone being robbed by a woman, though I'm sure it happens. But I'm being robbed by a man.
- 15 But why is he a black man? Why is he a black man with a worn T-shirt and glassy eyes? Why do I not imagine being robbed by a white man?
- 16 I am standing in a gas station on Claiborne and Jackson waiting to pay the cashier when a black man walks up behind me. I do not turn around. I stare in front of me waiting to pay. I try not to admit that I am nervous because a black man has walked up behind me in a gas station in a bad neighborhood and he does not have a car.
- 17 There is another scenario I imagine. I am walking to my door with my gun in my hand and I hear the voice. The man mustn't have seen my gun. I get angry because I am threatened, because someone is endangering my life for the money in my pocket.
- 18 I turn and without really thinking, angry and frightened, I shoot. I kill a man for \$50. Or it could be \$100. It does not matter that he was trying to rob me. A man has died for money. Not my money or his money, just money. Who put the price on his life, he or I?
- 19 I remember driving one night with my friend in her parents' car. We stop at a red light at Carrollton and Tulane and a black man is crossing the street in front of us. My friend quickly but nonchalantly locks the doors with the power lock.
- 20 I am disgusted that she sees the man as a reminder to lock her doors. I wonder if he noticed the two girls nonchalantly lock their doors. I wonder how it feels to have people lock their doors at the sight of you.
- 21 I imagine again a confrontation in front of my house. I have my gun when the man asks for money. I am angry and scared, but I do not use the gun. I am afraid of what may happen to me if I don't use it, but I am more afraid of killing another human being, more afraid of trying to live with the guilt of murdering another person. I bet my life that he will take my money and leave, and I hope I win.
- 22 I am in a gas station on St. Charles and South Carrollton near my house and there is a black man waiting to pay the cashier. I walk up behind him to wait in line and he jumps and turns around.
- 23 When he sees me, he relaxes and says I scared him because of the way things have gotten in this neighborhood.
- 24 "Sorry," I say and smile. I realize I am not the only one who is frightened.