

Slug Fest

By Richard T. Lynch

They say some bullets have names on them. Aside from the manufacturer's, I've found this to be false. Few people know exactly which bullets are going to kill which people, and those possessing of such foreknowledge generally lack the time, reason, or suitable psychosis to etch monikers onto slugs. Many in our business are psychos, don't get me wrong, but it takes a special brand of whack job to go that extra mile.

Needless to say then, Frankie's pre-wipeout admonition, "Don't eat any bullets with your name on 'em," starts me off on the wrong foot - which isn't a good place to be when your job is to not get your ass shot off in a place where doing exactly that is some other guy's job. Who says there ain't no more competition in America?

We get the word from our scout saying the mark has been marked and we can go in. What the guy did, I have no friggin' clue. Nor do I care. All I know is I gotta keep the left flank covered. Since we're entering from the right, I'm the leadoff hitter.

We exit our chariot down the block and make our way up the sidewalk. We're supposed to be clear until we hit the target street, but out of nowhere (another phrase I hate, but what the hell, I'm using it) comes a storm of bullets. I dive behind a newsstand and wait until the spray is over. I look back at my guys. Sal is right next to me, his elbow sitting in some schmuck's coffee. Johnny's yelling from across the way, so I know he made it. Then I see Frankie. He's in the street with eight or ten red dots oozing blood down his shirt. He ain't moving. Did any of those slugs have his name on them? I ain't exposing myself to find out.

Johnny yells he's gonna charge, and then I hear some more lead. This means they're shooting at him, which means they're less likely to shoot at me. That sounds like a bitch of a thing to say, but gangsters are team players. We win together or we lose together. Unless one stabs another in the back, and then all bets are off.

I grip my piece tighter and peek around the Reader's Digests. The metal is coming from a roof up the block, too far for me to make an accurate shot unless I get very lucky. I won't need to be quite as lucky if I can get a few doors up before I go for the guy, but as long as I'm that far I might as well take out the mark.

Then it hits me. If they knew about us ahead of time to set up the ambush, they probably had enough warning to skate the mark - unless the mark is a cocky son of a bitch. But ones demanding our brand of retribution tend to snivel. Cocky they ain't, especially when they're about to get rubbed out and others have to put their asses on the line to bail them out.

I decide to bail out Johnny myself. I pull back in, take a couple of deep ones, and run for the nearest brownstone. It ain't too far, and I make it, so I get greedy and try for the next one. I make that one, too, and I get cocky. A lot cockier than a mark about to be erased, and probably cockier than I have a right to be at this point.

It catches up with me, and so does the roof lead. Almost. Shots ping around me, but none of them hit what their aimer was aiming at, namely my ass and anything attached to it. Maybe the slugs don't have my name on them. Maybe they get the vibe I ain't hungry. Maybe I'm obsessing a bit too much over a stupid fuckin' phrase.

I get under the roof guy, who's near the mark's corner. Against my better judgment, I decide to go for the mark. Do I think that'll stop the pain rain? Not by a long shot, but maybe it'll make 'em think. God knows someone around here should be doing some of that.

I make it to the corner, almost as if someone meant me to. What's around it? Yep, you got it. More guns, street level and bearing on my person. I stop and ponder, since there's nothing else I can do and no way I'm getting out of it. Maybe these bullets have my name on them. Maybe there's one in all capital letters and another in lowercase and still another bullet with my name spelled backwards. Maybe the gunmen have taken bets on which one will actually kill me, and they need to differentiate so they know who won. Maybe the winner will make the losers dance the tango.

I smirk.

Richard T. Lynch is a writer who grew up on Long Island, NY and currently lives in Manhattan. Richard has been published in Journal of the Blue Planet and has a self-published science fiction novel called Pendulum. When not crafting screenplays and other works of fiction, he moonlights as a production assistant on film sets. As a writer, Richard is always looking to bring his audiences highly original works the likes of which they haven't seen before. Whether or not he succeeds, you be the judge.