

Kill Him, Slowly

Short Horror Tale No.7

By
Ian Thompson

(Free Sample via The Independent Author Network)

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Kill Him, Slowly

“Kill him, Slowly.”

Everyone who hires me to do a job says those words. They can't resist it. Not many of my employers appreciate having to call me 'Mr Slowly' – but they all enjoy the punch line.

Funnily enough, I never do kill slowly. I don't believe in causing undue suffering. I'll end a life because someone pays, and I'll do it however they'd like it done. Killing slowly or torturing a target goes against my personal code, so does killing a minor or a pregnant woman. Don't think I'm squeamish, I'm not – I'm just a professional.

I've been Mr Slowly since I turned twenty-two, some eleven years ago. During that time, I've completed a hundred and seventy-two contracts. Including bodyguards belonging to targets, I've deleted three hundred and four people. I've shot, stabbed, garrotted, fought hand-to-hand... done virtually everything, including devising creative accidents. If I was a chess player instead of an assassin, I'd be considered a Grand Master. As it stands, I'm a Grand Master of Death.

Who is Mr Slowly, though? Really? I am, all the time. Any other name I use is part of a disguise. My birth name was 'Marty Forely' – but Marty is long dead and forgotten to me now. Marty was a kid who got his sandwiches stolen in school, who hated violence, sucked at sports and loved video games. I discarded the identity of Marty like a snake shedding a skin. Mr Slowly is who I am and who I was always meant to be.

* * *

My new target was a millionaire.

My employer spoke to me anonymously over the dark net, that sublevel of the internet used by shadowy members of society. She was a woman who had a grievance. I stopped her before she went into detail – firstly, because such information might reveal her identity; secondly, because I didn't care. Your mailman doesn't care why you want a box delivered – he does it to get paid... I don't care why you want someone dead – I just want to get paid.

She gave me the address, which was three miles outside the city. A secluded mansion amid forty acres of gardens. There might be tight security to contend with. The target, Joshua J. Woods, was alleged to enjoy the company of high-class hookers. When I went in, my employer wanted everyone dead: Woods, his guards and any hookers who might be there. Then I was to start a fire before I left.

I asked for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. She haggled... upwards... and argued the job was worth four hundred thousand to her. It wouldn't have been chivalrous to argue, so I accepted. The money was transferred in a few minutes and I made a promise to have her target dead within seven days.

She ended the conversation overjoyed: a promise from Mr Slowly is a death sentence. I never fail.

The last thing she said was predictable:

“Oh, and one last thing. Kill him, Slowly.”

* * *

Two days should have given me ample time to do my background research.

In my business, you had to know your target first and the chosen location second. Nothing is more dangerous than a target you don't know or a place that holds secrets.

Joshua J. Woods had done for investment banking what magicians often do for their beautiful sidekicks. He'd put hundreds of millions of pensions and invested savings into a secure place... and it had all miraculously vanished. Four years of his whizz-kid lawyers working their own kind of magic, and Woods had emerged free of any criminal charges. And, unlike many of his investors, he hadn't been destitute. The mansion was just one of eleven luxury homes he had across the globe.

It was targets like Woods who brought a sense of real job satisfaction to being a murderer. If I kill you, I'll take responsibility for your murder if I'm caught. Woods had destroyed tens of thousands of lives by being a slimy, underhanded bastard. I relished the thought of ending him.

Weirdly, beyond his history as a crooked businessman, I could find nothing on Woods. No history before his first investment company appeared on the scene in 2001. No family, place of birth, education, previous jobs, or medical records... Zero. In 2001, Woods and his company had apparently been dropped onto the earth from space. This impressed me. I can get records which few people even dream of looking for – Woods was my first target for whom there were no records to

find.

The only information I unearthed made the situation stranger still. Woods had never entered his company offices: everything had been done by the internet or by phone; perhaps, rarely, senior employees had visited him at one of his homes, but I had no such reports. No one even knew what Woods looked like. The millionaire was a recluse who refused to attend events of any kind. He'd never had a photo taken in his life. When I attempted to hunt down an old lover, I found he had apparently had none. Nor did any of the high class escort agencies know of him. The man was a ghost. An enigma.

I usually have a thick file prepared on a target before I go in to kill him or her. In Woods' case, I wouldn't have known who he was if he passed me on the street. Heck, I didn't even know how old he was.

Researching the mansion, I grew mildly annoyed by another mystery. Every record and blueprint for the building had been 'lost'. No one knew the architect or who had been commissioned for the build. Neither did anyone know which company had fitted out the interior. All I had was an address.

A mystery man living in a mystery house.

Soon to be a corpse in a smouldering ruin.

* * *

For three days and nights, I scrutinised the Woods property.

In essence, there were three parts. At the heart was Woods' home. Around this were the inner gardens, bordered by a six-foot high red brick wall that formed a square a thousand yards wide. Beyond the wall were the huge outer gardens.

Again, more mystery.

The fence and gates surrounding the property were similar to any you would find around a farmer's fields. This wouldn't hinder paparazzi, thieves or people like myself from looking into or entering the outer gardens. More importantly, no one from the house ever went for a walk in those fantastic gardens, with their beds of gorgeous flowers, ornate fountains and sinuous gravel pathways... So why expend money on a designer and the floral and stone ornamentation in the first place? Plus, the ongoing maintenance work by visiting contractors each day must have been costly.

Clashing against the luxury of the gardens was the starkness of the brick wall square. There were numerous doors and gateways through the wall, the widest being at the front: a pair of wrought iron gates set over the tarmac road running between the highway outside and the mansion itself.

From a hill a mile away, I was able to spy beyond the wall and into the inner gardens. There were no flowers there: just a sweep of dull lawns. *Why have a house that looked onto boring lawns... then amazing gardens hidden behind a six-foot wall?*

Woods' mansion itself was in a T-shape and was constructed from more red brick, topped off with terracotta tiles on the angled rooftops. I'd seen more attractive-looking warehouses.

The bottom part of the T was a one-storey section, about thirty feet wide and eighty feet long. There was a pair of double-doors at the front of this and several windows along the sides. Cars were parked either side; two black limos and a variety of vehicles belonging to security staff. Regular glimpses of guards through the windows of this section of the house indicated it was solely for the security team.

The crosspiece of the T-shape was much larger: three storeys high, and measuring around two hundred yards wide by fifty across. Although there were windows on every floor, these ones proved fake upon examination by binoculars: instead of glass, the 'windows' held dull plate steel. Evidently, Mr Woods wasn't a fan of light – or fresh air for that matter. No second doorway into the house existed, so the only way to reach the main, rear part of the building was through the front doors.

Security consisted of several layers. Five Dobermans were left to run through the outer gardens at night – no one (man or animal) checked those gardens during daylight. CCTV cameras were situated along the walls of the inner garden, recording activity in both sets of gardens. Day and night, seven security guards patrolled the inner gardens. These guards worked in three teams of two men, each pair walking a Doberman; and a seventh man – a real big son-of-a-bitch – who roamed alone. I guessed there were at least two of those big guys, since there was always one on patrol, any time of the day.

By observation, I found the guards were on eight hour shifts. At each shift-change, twelve men left and twelve more arrived. Only the big guys never left: evidently, they lived on the estate. Shifts of a dozen men equated to the six I saw patrolling outside and six inside, monitoring the CCTV feeds and waiting on standby. Plus, the giants.

The night before I was going in, a limo left the property and returned with four prostitutes. Even from a distance, I could tell the girls were street hookers – not the upper class kind I had expected and tried to track down. The girls went through the double doors of the mansion and remained inside that night and throughout the following day.

As evening began to draw in, I hoped the four girls would be sent home. They were just bystanders in what was going to befall Woods, his guards and his mansion. If the girls got out in time, I wouldn't need to kill them.

Eight o'clock arrived and the girls were still inside. Which meant they had to die. I didn't feel any true sorrow – it was merely an unnecessary feature of the job.

The sorrow would come the next night, when I lay in bed reliving what I had done. I knew I would see each and every face in perfect detail. Looks of surprise, disbelief and pleading. All the blood. All the death. It would be a night of hell, when my normally-suppressed emotions raged at me. For days after, I'd convince myself I was finished and would never accept another job. Then I'd come to my senses, and Mr Slowly would log onto the internet and post himself as available for contracts... After all, what else was I going to do? Bakers bake. Singers sing. Killers kill.

End Of Sample

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