

Write Your Life

A micro memoir writing project

Write about an ordinary danger you have thought about.

The Son

It was a luncheon for humanities educators. At my table was a dean from a college in Illinois. He wore a navy suit and colorful tie. He was holding forth, telling us about an acquaintance who had accidentally shot and killed his son. “But I still believe,” he said, fingering the top button on his vest, “that when you hear someone in your house in the middle of the night, the best thing you can say is these words: ‘I have a shotgun.’”

Still, the son.

In a few years I had accumulated a gun collection. Fathers kept giving me guns. A historic twelve gauge that belonged to my grandfather. Good to hang above the fireplace.

“Don’t shoot it,” my father said. “It might blow up in your face.”

A Beretta twelve gauge that belonged to my father-in-law. To my knowledge, he had never fired it.

And a few functional shotguns.

I didn’t hunt. Unless you call discouraging squirrels on our bird feeder hunting. I kept a baby blue Daisy BB gun next to an upstairs bedroom window. In an afternoon, one brazen squirrel pillaging our feeder could empty it. They cast contemptuous looks at me, up at my perch. I raised the sash, aimed, and fired at their hindquarters. It didn’t seem to bother them.

“You shouldn’t do that,” Tizi said.

“It doesn’t hurt them.”

“How do you know that?”

They kept coming back. That’s how I knew. I thought I knew. I stopped anyway.

When the grandchildren started coming, I passed the two guns of value on to our son. The rest of them I took to the police department, where they would be safe. When the squirrels came, I raised the sash in that upstairs bedroom window and called down, “I have a BB gun.”