

Old Doc's

By: Brandon Fries

Summer was drawing to a close, but the weather gave one last push of hot air before the fall.

I crossed the train tracks and walked a hundred yards down the old dusty gravel road. An army of lush trees surrounded his house, which was also his place of business; an oasis in the middle of the desolate farmland.

The crunch of gravel startled me, I looked back to see a black 1977 Cadillac pull past me and park in front of the white garage. A husky man rolled out of the driver's seat and waved me over. It was Old Doc. Many say that Old Doc was Colonel Sanders, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken. He had the white flowing hair and the colonel's classic facial hair, but the real KFC founder died in 1980.

He exited the car and greeted me with a bear hug.

"Damn good to see you, son," he said to me. "Wanna see what I came up with this trip?"

Old Doc was a purveyor of odd things. He had several white sheds, littered on his property that held his "treasures," as he said, but most people called it junk.

"Sure, why not," I replied.

He turned around and slid the Cadillac logo to the side, revealing the keyhole. He slammed his key in and turned it. The large metal sheet lifted and his head disappeared into the trunk and he emerged with a large wooden case.

He closed the lid of the trunk and put the case on top of it. He fumbled with the dark brown wooden top until it gave way, revealing a royal blue velvet lining and at least a dozen pistols.

"Just went down to the Sheriff's office and bought these beauties," he

said. "Every month they sell off old property that they've accumulated, and I got my hands on these."

He dug around and pulled out one gun.

"This one is a Walter P.38. It's what the Nazi's used in World War II. Here, take and feel it," he said, handing it over to me.

I took the gun and inspected it. It had a slender silver barrel and a brown handle that resembled guns I had seen in old war movies that I used to watch with my dad before he died.

He took the gun and put it back and returned with the smallest gun of the batch.

"The Beretta 418," he said, holding the gun up in admiration. "I've been trying to get my hands on one of these since the first time I saw a James Bond movie. This was his first gun. It's sleek and sexy."

He paused while finishing the worship of his newly prized possession.

"These are nice," I said, "but I'm not much of a gunman." I took the pistol and put it back in the case.

Old Doc smiled as he slid Beretta in the back of his pants. He stepped forward and swung his arm around me, leading me towards the house.

"I'm sorry, son, I completely forgot about that. I was just so excited to get my hands on this one."

We walked through the gate, and my skin shivered under the shade of the trees. The old man kept talking as we crossed the grass to the house. The people in town always joked that Old Doc wasn't a good salesman, but that he talked so much that people would buy stuff just to get him to shut up.

We heard the gate behind us creak open and followed by laughter. We turned around and saw a kid, not much older than seven, skip into the yard followed by a skinny man, wearing a

powdered blue Guayabera and white linen pants.

Old Doc took a quick step backward and his voice quivered, "What are you doing here?"

The boy got close to us, so Old Doc grabbed the little boy and pulled him close and held him in front of him with his left hand, and slid his right behind his back and gripped the Baretta.

I looked for a way out, but the blocked gate was the only option I could find. The man came closer, and I noticed a scar, leaving his right eye permanently shut.

"Why are you so paranoid, Doc?" the one-eyed man answered, slithering his way towards us. "I'm here to buy some dogs from you. You are still selling them, right?"

Old Doc let the boy go and took his hand off the gun. The boy ran to his father, unaware of the danger he had been in.

"Yes," he said. "Of course, which one are you interested in?"

"The two Yorkies please, they are for my wife and daughter."

They hit their queue perfectly. The first to walk through the gate was an elegant woman, wearing a perfectly fitted yellow dress, that cut down revealing a hint of her chest and perfectly hugged her body until it ended just above the knee.

Behind her I could hear the squeal of excitement as a girl, just older than her brother.

"Ellie?" I said. She smiled at me and waved.

Old Doc took the man across the lawn and found another gate I failed to see, and disappeared into the sunlight.

Ellie came over and gave me a quick hug.

"I can't believe I'm getting a puppy." She said to me. "Do you remember how badly I wanted a puppy?"

"Yes," I chuckled. "The entire school year."

Ellie plopped onto the ground, and I joined her.

"I'm going to name one of them Flash. And the other one, Missy. And when they have puppies, I'm going to name them too. My father says they can have puppies when they get older. I'm so excited. I've always wanted dogs, but my father said he wouldn't allow me to have one. Once I brought home a cat I found in the bushes, and the next day I found it with blood all around it in the backyard. I don't know what happened to it."

"That sounds awful," I said.

"Dad said it was one coyote's." Her eyes fell downwards, and she brushed her palm on the tips of the grass. A small tear welled up in her eye.

"Well, I'm glad you're getting one now," I said, reaching out to her and holding her as she whimpered. "And it looks like they are coming out now."

The dogs yelped in her dad's hands as they came through the gate. She looked up at me with tears in her eyes and gave me a long hug, then got up and ran off to greet the little balls of fur while I watched her every step.

Her father paused as she approached him. He cupped her face in his hand and gently wiped away her tears; but as he looked up at me, his jaw tightened as his remaining eye burned. He let her face go and ran towards me. I could hear my heart pounding as he grabbed me by my shirt.

"What did you do to my daughter?" He yelled. "Are you some kind of pervert?"

"I—um—no." I felt my breath fade as his fist hit my gut.

Air rushed out of my lungs.

I struggled to breathe.

"You are, aren't you? You like to touch little girls?"

Ellie ran over, but he pushed her away.

"I—didn't," I gasped.

He turned me around and pushed me towards an open window on the porch.

"I see it in your eyes," he yelled.

"You need not say a thing. I'm going to leave you with a little reminder."

He grabbed my hand and put it at the bottom of the window. It was an original from the 1950s. A single-pane window with a hard wooden frame around it and chipping white paint. He grabbed the top of the window with his left hand while his right hand was on the back of my neck. I knew what was going to happen next.

My ears began ringing.

Spit from his mouth peppered my ear as he yelled from behind me.

It all slowed down, and I realized I was taller than him.

I stood up while grabbing his left wrist.

He lifted off the ground, floundering on my back.

I pulled him over my shoulder as the window started coming down, but I froze when I heard the crash of the glass.

I felt the wetness fall from my brow and stepped to the side.

The ringing faded; replaced with gurgling.

He stayed standing.

His arms spread out.

His body spasmed.

Blood poured onto the floor.

Old Doc grabbed him and pulled him from the shattered window onto the floor. Doc's hands covered the stream of blood gushing from his neck. The old man looked at me, with his voice shaking.

"Do you know who this is?"