

I AM THE BULLET...

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I am the bullet—and I have no conscience.

You will treat me with respect because once I leave, you have no control over my actions. Once I'm gone I will do as I please, governed only by the laws of physics.

And the next time you see me I will have done my work, bringing on your life a potential gamut of emotions ranging from pleasure, satisfaction and exhilaration to anger, pain, grief and regret.

Use me wisely and with discretion, for I can snuff out the flame of a king's life as easily as I can bring delight to a ten-year-old's face by recording for posterity a first bulls eye on a humble paper target.

It took the fire of a crucible to conceive me, but now I'm no longer molten metal—and therein lies the deceptiveness of my power. When I was cast in the mould of hot lead you knew I was dangerous, but now you underestimate me as I lie in the womb of the cartridge case, a solidified metal teardrop the size of your fingernail. Beware, for the day I'm born I will go from womb to tomb in the fraction of a second. For me there will be no childhood, no puberty, no adulthood—just a nano-second of flight before I find my terminal resting place.

You must be mother, father, teacher, and priest, because you will guide me on my short life's path. I am but an emotionless, inanimate object with no heartbeat and no conscience. Once the hot gases of propulsion give birth to my destination, they will also signal my death knell, for I will have no childhood, no puberty, no adulthood. Instant birth to instant rest, with but a momentary tick of the clock

of time to bring pleasure or pain.

The responsibility for my actions rests squarely on your shoulders. You conceived me, you entombed me in a cartridge case with my brother primer and sister gunpowder, slaves to your bidding.

If you didn't cast, size, lube and load me yourself, you bought me just like you bought Mister Gump's box of chocolates. But unlike the box of chocolates, with me what you see is what you get. I am the corked bottle encasing a quiescent genie. Once the genie is free, you know exactly what potential can be unleashed—but you had better choose your three wishes wisely.

The acquisition of firearms and ammunitions is sequential, one way or the other. Rarely does one initially have a vast supply of ammo of a specific caliber and subsequently acquire a firearm to use or expend this supply. While people often buy a secondary or tertiary weapon for this reason, usually one purchases the gun, cleaning equipment, accessories, and a storage unit—be it a case, bag or gun safe—before any thought is given to what ammunition is going to be obtained and used in the weapon.

And after spending a king's ransom on all this equipment, you head for the local gun emporium and spend a pittance on a case of the cheapest garbage military surplus ammo you can find.

Then when you miss, you blame it on me. When you accidentally discharge a firearm because you neglected to extract me from the chamber, you blame it on me. When I plow my way through bone and muscle, and fail to incapacitate a madman, you blame it on me. But when you achieve the result you wanted, then it's because of your masterful ability, and I'm forgotten—used, expended, and spent.

Such is my lot—Man's ingratitude and lack of respect for the humble bullet. Because you paid for the ammunition, I become your possession; but you don't own me—I own your soul. I will make you or break you in my short lifespan.

The slightest marksmanship error on your part and I will embarrass you in front of your peers. The slightest lapse in concentration while manipulating a firearm and I will take an innocent life. I will ricochet off a windshield, a belt buckle, or a baseball cap bill when you've been told I should have penetrated the material—and I will just as easily over-penetrate

an apartment wall and forever snuff out the future of a defenseless child.

Doctor Mann spent a lifetime trying to find out why I didn't always perform as external ballistics would demand I do—and he went to his grave with my secret intact. But you insist on imbibing alcohol and firing bullets into the air in a puerile Yuletide celebration, understanding nothing of the physics of my flight path—or my power to change your life forever.

You will spend endless hours discussing the merits and demerits of my size and velocity, but when all is said and done, it really doesn't mean anything. The truth of the matter is that once I depart from your gun muzzle you no longer have control over me—and I, too, no longer have control over my own destiny.

The next time you see a humble unfired bullet remember that without me your gun is as useless as fingers on a rooster. And once loaded, I can be as dangerous as a drunk in rush hour traffic. Once my power is unleashed, there can be only two results—delight and satisfaction, or disaster and horror. And this will reach fruition in the blink of an eye, for I have no childhood, no puberty, no adulthood.

Treat me with respect, for I am the bullet—and I have no conscience. ■

[Louis Awerbuck is Director of the internationally acclaimed Yavapai Firearms Academy.

Course information and schedules are available at their website at www.yfainc.com]

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- 1. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.**
- 2. Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.**
- 3. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.**

And - after you have handled firearms wash your hands and face with soap and cold water.