



I was born yesterday.

Evenso, I'm completely mature, capable as I'll ever be of doing my work in the world. It's true of all machines and that's what I am.

Yesterday when I was finished, polished, oiled, tested, and boxed for shipment, I knew I was one of the best of my kind.

Today I'm for sale. I'm a gun. My function is to kill.

My future? Certainly I'll be well-used; I've been finely made, carefully crafted, my bore is straight and true.

My maker created me to serve my country and my owner for many years, faithfully and dependably. I shall fulfill that destiny.

What will tomorrow bring?

This new gun will be purchased by a man. He may be a policeman, a soldier, a collector, a hunter -- or a thief, drug addict, criminal.

This gun may be purchased by a police officer who may lose his gun through carelessness, accident, a criminal act upon him.

This gun may be issued to a soldier who may lose his gun in battle or it may be stolen from him.

This gun may be purchased by a collector who may sell his gun. He may give it away, or it may be stolen.

Foes of gun control argue that restraints upon freedom to own guns will put into the exclusive hands of criminals weapons of destruction; they believe it's wrong to limit gun-ownership; they fight passage of laws requiring registration of arms and restricting who may own firearms.

Consider:

I'm a World War II German Lueger. My first owner was a German soldier who died in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. When his body was found by an American GI, I was removed from the German's lifeless hand.

The American brought me home, and occasionally displayed, cleaned and oiled me: I was well-treated. As time passed, however I spent more and more years in a bureau drawer and seldom got any attention.

One day when the American left his house he was expecting a workman to fix the plumbing. He left his door unlocked. Between the time he left and the plumber arrived, a stranger entered the house, removed me and several other items of value, and took us away.

I have a new owner now. He uses me much more often although as yet, no bullet has passed my muzzle, but I'm loaded and ready to go to work at a moment's notice.

Tomorrow my new owner will pull my trigger and I'll again be working. Another man will die. That's what I was created for.

My new owner will then run, holding me in his hand, hardly realizing I'm there. When he notices me, he'll be frightened. He'll throw me off a bridge into the water, or bury me in a sand dune, or perhaps hide me where no one can find me.

If he throws me off a bridge or buries me in sand, I'll slowly rust away. If he hides me in a safe place, he'll come after me some day. Or perhaps someone else will find me first, and put me to use again.

I am a shot gun. I have a beautiful long barrell and a handsomely carved walnut stock. I've been built for deer hunting, and I do my job efficiently. All it takes is someone slipping a shell in me, sliding the bolt home, aiming me in the right direction, and pulling my trigger. Most of the year I spend zippered into my case and hung safely in a dark corner of a closet. In the fall, I'm taken out, cleaned and oiled, loaded, and off we go into the bright woods, hunting deer.

This year, before my owner got me ready for our annual outing, I was discovered by a neighbor's youngster who quietly removed me while my owner was away for the day and the house unoccupied.

The boy has a drug habit. He uses me frquently. He takes me with him when he needs cash to support his habit. Together, we persuade other people to give him money.

When my old owner comes for me, he'll find me gone. He doesn't know yet I'm missing.

When my now owner, some night soon, encounters resistance, he'll put me to use for purposes I was never intended for, and some innocent person will be seriously injured.

None of this is my fault. I'm a gun. I can't control what's done with me. I'm a machine created to kill; not to murder and not to maim; just to kill anything I'm pointed at, anytime the person behind me pulls my trigger and there's something alive in front of me.

It's no fault of mine nor any concern of mine who holds me and pulls my trigger. I'll do what any machine will do; what I'm built to do, no matter who controls my action.

It's not the fault of guns the crime rate is climbing, so there's no need to register guns or control their sale or possession. It's the criminals who need controlling. It's the careless owners, the people who are drug-addicted, and thieves and murderers and people who will use me for illegal purposes who should be registered and retracted. Not me; I'm just a machine.

You say you can't control the people? You can't distinguish between people who use drugs and those who do not? You don't know who may not use drugs today, but may tomorrow?

You don't know which people are thieves? You're unable to predict who will become, overnight, a murderer? Your society is overrun with criminals who pretend to be honest law-abiding citizens and hide the fact of their illegal activities?

Oh.

If there were ballistics records of every gun, if lawenforcement officials knew where the guns were, who had them, and if every time a gun changed hands or was lost or stolen, a report was made, you say, it would be easier to distinguish between those who use guns for good purposes and those who are criminals?

That makes sense. Other machines are registered and regulated; especially dangerous ones such as automobiles, power boats and aircrafts. What's wrong with that?

Why would any law-abiding citizen object to registering his gun? Should it be lost or stolen, he'd have a chance of getting it back. Well, yes, it is a nuisance. When I'm used improperly, though, it's apt to be more than a nuisance to the person I'm used against.

As long as everyone realizes it's not the fault of the gun, I don't mind being registered.

It's all right with me. I'm a gun.