

A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS

by Chris Rose

“One last job”, thought Jack Robino. “One last job, then I’ll finally retire.” Jack already knew that it was time to retire, to give up working and go and collect his pension like other people of his age. He’d been doing this job for a long time now, as many years as he could remember, and he had to admit to himself that he was getting too old. This was a young man’s job.

He wasn't as quick as he had been in the past. Now he moved more slowly. He had a pain in his knee which he thought was probably arthritis. Now Jack found it difficult to understand all the latest technological advances. And then there was all the pressure, the stress and the risks that a job like his had. Now there was much more pressure, stress and risk than when he had started. Such a long time ago, Jack thought to himself, more than thirty years now. I started doing this job before my son was born. The job was so much easier in those days, thought Jack. It was always much more simple, quick and easy to get a job done then. No, he thought again, now it was definitely time to quit. But before I quit, I'll do one last job.

With the money he had earned he had bought himself a big house up in the countryside, a long way from the city where he worked, up in New England. Sometimes he went up there at weekends, and spent time in his big country house enjoying the peace and quiet. He was looking forward to spending his retirement there. The money I make from one last job, thought Jack, will be enough to make it possible for me to drive up to my big house in New England and never have to come back again. Think of that!

Even though the risks and the pressure and the stress of his job were so much greater now, Jack had to admit that – at least - the pay was so much greater too! Now he earned nearly ten times what he earned when he started. His pay had risen ten times over. This, of course, had made him a rich man. A successful businessman, that was how he thought of himself.

In his house in the country, Jack planned to spend more time with his son, Jack Junior. "I hardly know my son", thought Jack to himself. "I've spent so much time with my job and my work that I've neglected my son. That's a terrible thing, and I must change it. Now that I'm going to retire I can spend more time with my son, that's important." Jack knew that his son had recently got married. Jack was hoping to have grandchildren soon.

"It'll be nice to have the grandchildren up at my big house" he thought. "I'll be able to spend lots of time with them when I retire, after this last one job." He heard from his son once a month or so. It was usually just a quick telephone call. Jack didn't even really know what his son did. He knew that he hadn't finished university. That didn't matter so much to Jack. He himself had never been very good at school. Jack was proud of the fact that everything he knew he had taught himself. There was no university that could teach you to do his kind of work anyway.

Jack Junior always seemed to have lots of money, though. That was important. He also seemed to be travelling a lot. When he phoned his father, he was always in some faraway place. Sometimes he was in California, in Los Angeles or San Francisco, sometimes he was in Texas, or Chicago. Once he was in Mexico, and another time he even called from London. Jack was happy that his son was seeing the world, even if he couldn't spend much time with his father.

One last job. Today was the day. For the last time, Jack went to the cupboard where he kept the equipment he needed for his job. He opened the cupboard and took out everything that was in it. Two rifles, each with a silencer. One very small pistol which he could put in his pocket, and one larger one that he put in a holster under his jacket. The larger pistol also had a silencer which he took with him. He cleaned the pistols and the rifles carefully, loaded them with bullets then put the rifles in their cases and went outside and put them in the boot of his car. He made sure he had the small pistol in his pocket, and that the bigger one was safe in his holster. Safety was very important in his line of work. Then Jack Robino drove off into the middle of the city to do one last job.

Jack parked his car at the usual place. He always stopped at a telephone box on the corner of Madison Avenue and West 42nd Street, near the Grand Central Station, just next to a bar that he liked. He knew that his employer was going to call him on that phone in exactly five minutes. He checked his watch. He sat in the car for three minutes. Then he got out of the car and stood next to the phone. Two minutes later, the telephone rang. He picked it up immediately. There was the usual voice on the end of the line. It was his employer's voice. It was the voice that always called when