

BUCK SHOT



One memorable winter, all six island towns buzzed with the story of the feud between Buck Thorne and Knut Knudsen, both of whom claimed lobstering rights in the same area and were raiding each other's pots. The trouble reached a climax one evening when Sam and Officer Walt Hanna, patrolling Circuit Avenue, heard two shots. Startled, they raced off in the general direction from which they figured the shots had come.

They were lucky, and at the tennis courts on Wamsutta Avenue, they found a small crowd that had just come out of the nearby Oak Bluffs Senior Center. Near the courts and about fifty feet apart were two cars. Knut Knudsen was standing next to one and was apparently trying to explain what had happened. The other car held the body of Buck Thorne.

Sam, leaving procedural details to Hanna, noticed that one shot had entered through the car door window, killing Buck, while a second shot, apparently fired by Buck, had exited through the window. With this in mind, Sam gave his full attention to Knut.

According to Knut, he'd arrived first. When Buck drove up, Knut got out of his car, expecting Buck to do the same, but instead, Buck shot at him.

"He missed," Knut said. "I shot back in self-defense and you can prove it by the window, so go ahead and look."

Sam did, and saw what you see. What do you think he should do next?

Questions

1. Does Knut's story give him an adequate case of self-defense?
2. If your answer to the above is affirmative, would you nevertheless charge Knut with the illegal possession of a gun?
3. Do the bullet holes show which shot was fired first?
4. What action do you think Sam should take?

Solution on page 57.