



by
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He had been the only witness to what had occurred. Besides, this was New York; and with racial tensions running as high as they were, there was just a chance they would believe him. Eddie didn't know whether it was the piercing beams of bright light in his eyes or the inquisitive faces of

the five interrogating officers which made him feel more ill at ease. He was sweaty, tired and scared—but not too scared to think.

The heat from the lights in the smoke-filled room sent his mind back to the dark alley where Eddie felt the muscular arms of the huge Negro policeman hurl him against the brick wall. He glanced over at Joe who lay face-down in a muddy puddle tinted with the sanguine liquid which gushed from his back like a stream swollen with the melting winter snows. At twenty years of age, he had been the picture of perfect physical conditioning; and now he was dead, with a police bullet lodged in his spine.

Their careful planning had gone down the drain. It had seemed so simple. The pawn shop was off the beaten paths of the city in one of the darker sections where only the bravest would venture at night. It would be the perfect set-up for just breaking the window, grabbing the loot and running. Who would have ever thought that the police officer would round the corner when he did? Eddie kept thinking to himself: "If Joe didn't bring the gun with him like I told him, he'd still be alive. You just can't fire at a New York cop and get away with it. And then the silly punk tossed me the gun when he got hit as if I'm supposed to hold off that black bull. I may be stupid, but I ain't crazy. As soon as I turned the corner, I lobbed it in the

second story window of McGraw's abandoned tenement. That stinking nigger cop wouldn't catch *me* with a rod."

A nudge from one of the interrogating officers brought Eddie back to the police station. They began firing questions, and the boy knew that the cop mustn't get away with killing his friend. Eddie would think of something.

"That stinking nigger cop had no cause to do it. He did it on purpose. He didn't even yell for us to stop. He screamed something about us being white punks and then blasted away. I don't care what he says. We didn't have a gun. He had no cause. He killed Joe in cold blood. If it had been another nigger, the kid would be scot free right now. He had no cause. He just fired and Joe dropped with out a chance. That stinking nigger killed him in cold blood!"

These were serious charges to make. An officer can use only what force is necessary to overcome a criminal. If Eddie was telling the truth, Officer Everett Calhoun would face a murder charge. It seemed impossible to believe that a man with a wife and two children, with four years of stellar performance on the force, with an outstanding service record could do what was charged. But nevertheless the charges were made and Calhoun was slated for trial.

Eddie's father was a very influential man. He wouldn't take

the word of a Negro against that of his son. It's true the two had grown apart since the death of Eddie's mother, but Eddie was still his own flesh and blood. He wouldn't lie to his father. A few phone calls and the machine would begin to roll. Talk to the right people and you can get anything you want.

There was just too much against the officer. Racial tensions had been high; and from some unknown source the prosecution dug up that, no more than two weeks before the incident, Calhoun had saved his oldest child from a beating at the hands of two white boys. The fact of the matter was there was no gun to be found. And Eddie's testimony clinched the case for the state.

The all-white jury took a long time to deliberate. It was a precedent in New York courts. The police officer was found guilty and sentenced to death in the electric chair. The appeals and requests for stays of execution on the part of the defense fell through; and as Calhoun marched down the long hall to the waiting death chair, he took courage in the unending hope that the boy would save him. "My God—won't somebody believe me? I'm innocent! Can't you hear me? I'm innocent!"

Eddie's father read the account of the execution to his son. It would be a lesson to any other cops who tried to go out of their

way in dealing out punishments. He was glad that he had put the pressure on his newspaper friends. That call to his friends in the city government had been a great help, too. No son of his would be made a fool of by a Negro, even if he were a cop. He was content in the satisfaction of a thorough defense of his son; and that publicity he had received would certainly be of importance when he ran for office next fall.

They found the note along side the body behind a clump of bushes in one of the darker sections of Memorial Park. No one had seen him enter. No one had heard the shot. The crumpled paper in Eddie's left hand and Joe's gun in his right were the only testimony to what had happened. "Dad; I'm sorry. So help me, I'm sorry. I thought that it would be easy. He was only a nigger. I thought that would make a difference. Dad—I did it. Just as if I shot him myself, I killed Calhoun. I'm sorry. So help me, I'm sorry. I wish I never said what I did. I wish someone had caught on. I wish someone had believed him instead of me. You don't know what it's like, Dad. I'm sorry."

But Eddie's father knew what it was like as he stared in horror at the piece of wrinkled paper. The taste of a man's blood would be forever on his lips; the red life-giving fluid would be indelibly splashed on his hands. He knew what it was like, and so did a sickened and disgusted city.