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Category: Short Story

Late Night Drive

Bright fluorescent lights appear in the rear view mirror. Red. Blue. Red. A piercing siren weeps through the dark night resembling a mother in deep sorrow for the lost of her child. The screech of tires echoes through the night as they grind against the old pavement of the highway and the hum of an old engine roars.

A mix of worries begin to race in Anthony's mind: panic sets in, his thoughts become erratic and wild, news reports of rampant cops in other cities makes him wonder what all went wrong. Was he accidentally speeding through the highway? The clock read 9:33PM. He was making good time coming back home from visiting his college friend so there was no reason he would be speeding. Had his license plate expired and the cop caught wind of that? That is highly unlikely because he just renewed his tag about a month or two ago before he began college in late August and what would be the chances of the officer saw the license plate in the pitch black night let alone run the plate with such haste. So what had he done wrong? His thoughts are interrupted by the sound of a voice from his passenger side.

"Oh, just pull over right here on the shoulder. It doesn't seem like a bad place to stop while we figure out what's happening," his brother, Keith, says calmly.

Keith always was referred to as the optimist of the family. The one people could count on to make the smile. Witty comments and an outgoing personality made him radiated to others a sense of bliss and peace with such ease like morning sun gently shining upon the natural world. Everyone adored him once they met him whether in public or at school. He excelled at sports, always seeming like if they were made specifically for him. Many considered him the pride of the family, the lone star that would eventually end up getting out of the neighborhood, even if his parents wouldn't admit it. Even Anthony knew by the way his parents would celebrate every tiny achievement that Keith would have to encourage their son to try harder and so he did. Time and time again, he would excel past that masses, standing out like dancing fireflies in a lush fields of green. When the time came where life would begin to try and overcome, he would always get back up and better than ever.

The car came to a halt on the shoulder. "It'll be fine," Keith reassured his visibly panicked brother and they waited as the sheriff car stopped right behind them.

As the officer got out of the car, it seemed like a usual officer sporting his navy blue uniform with a golden sheriff's badge that reflected off light in Anthony's rear view mirror. The uniform looked vintage but yet very well kept: not a stain or wrinkle anywhere in sight besides obvious creases from around his joints, the badge looked to be polished and contrary to the uniform, it looked new, shining black shoes without any scuff, a simple .45 holstered around his waist, and a black rimmed hat to bring his outfit all together. He strutted to the car in front of him, calmly following the regular routine as he closely inspected the situation for any danger with his trusty flashlight in hand. It was visible that the officer had been a seasoned one evident of his soldem gaze and graying hair. He knew the ropes and had every intention of upholding the law but also knew the dangers well. He set his hand on the roof of the car and continued walking until he approached the driver's window and signalled it to be rolled down.

"What are you boys doing out here so late? The nights around here are dangerous and if something happens, nearest contact isn't available until 15 minutes out from the white chapel up ahead," said the officer. His voice was coarse and gruff, yet highly modulated.

A voice took over from the passenger side just as Anthony was about to speak. "Well sir, we were driving back home from a friend's house that we were visiting out of town. We stayed there a bit longer than we were supposed to and now we're driving back, sir. My brother is the one driving."

The officer looked at Anthony with curiosity. He spoke. "Are you going to let your little brother do all the talking for you?"

"N-no sir," his broken voice muttered out.

He gave Anthony another glance and headed back to his car and sat in the driver's seat. Some distant talking

could be heard along with scattered sounds of a radio. "Way to look like we have totally don't have anything to hide," Keith spoke to taunt his brother who was still thinking the worst possible scenario. "Just calm down, everything is going to be fine. Stop being such a wuss."

Before he could even mutter a comeback, he heard the crunching of gravel as the officer made his way back to the car. Anthony's head started to spin and he thought that it would be over and would be dragged out of the car for it to be inspected for drugs that would ultimately get planted inside the glove department like in those late-night criminal investigation T.V. shows. Again, the pessimist in him flooded every single part of his body and he unbuckled his seat belt. He prepared to be detained in the name of the law and he accepted it. Anthony looked up at the man who decided his fate and prepared to be told to get out of the vehicle. The officer slowly reached down to his holster and time was beginning to stop for Anthony and he closed his eyes. He heard some shuffling of the officer and then he heard a click.

"You boys seem to have a faulty tail lamp," the officer said calmly.