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about 450 words

Elevator Blues

by Jamal Rashad

The drab reflection in the elevator door was enough to turn John's head from it. How could he go through with this? How could he have found himself in this situation? There was no time for reflections, though; internal or external. It was time for action.

"You got something on your coat, Liyah."

"I'm not falling for that again, Uncle John," she giggled.

John flashed a loving and playful smile to his niece despite the battle waging itself within him to mask the horrors he was preparing to face. What made matters worse was the somber melody crackling through the speakers of the 115 cubic feet of dilapidated steel and wood shaft. It reminded him of all he hoped to keep locked away during what had become valuable time with his late sister's only child. It reminded him of the phone call he'd received just the day before that asked him if we would take guardianship as he is her only living relative. It reminded him of the emptiness he'd felt in the pit of his stomach upon learning of his sister's "accident". It reminded him of the rage that replaced that emptiness and led him down a path he could no longer turn away from.

"Uncle John. Uncle John!" Liyah tugged at the arm of her uncle's tan overcoat. "The elevator stopped. Is this where we stop, too?"

"Yes, dear."

"I don't like it here. It smells funny." Her nose was scrunched as she pinched her nostrils closed. Careful not to stray too far from her uncle's coat tail, she grabbed hold of his clammy hands with a tight grip. "Where are we going?" she asked with a nasally tone.

"I have to leave you with a friend of mine for a few days. Don't worry, ok?" With a deep sigh, John forcibly smiled to her,

kissed her forehead, and lied to her, "everything is going to be fine."

Everything is not going to be ok. John pressed the button to the lobby and hung his head. The door closed and his weight shifted with the downward movement of the elevator, his head now rising from the motion and his eyes fixing on his reflection. *I could die tonight; but before I do, I plan to take as many of Rizzo's men with me as I can.* The chamber of his silver-plated Colt 1911 filled itself with a hollow-tipped round as he racked the slide to the rear. *My sister's murder will not go unpunished.*