3-29-2017

47 Seconds

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The following is an excerpt from 47 Seconds:

“So was it self preservation that drove you? Your life is more important than his? Because you’re a cop? Or because you’re white?”

There it was. All night I had been waiting for it. She knew everyone had already considered that. I assumed Gracie hadn’t mentioned it before out of some sense of pride. She had wanted to take me down even without playing the race card. It was too easy. Now that she had faltered, she needed to make up any ground she could. Now she was regaining her momentum. This was just another line of reasoning she had prepared for.

“Neither! It’s because I have a daughter. That’s why. It’s because I have a–”

“There! You just admitted you’d rather shoot a black suspect than a white one. It’s because of the color of his skin, not his actions. It’s because he’s black, not a cop. Does that make a difference?”

“I can’t believe you’re saying that. You don’t see–”

“Neither!” I shouted, louder than I had intended. A hush fell across the set as my mouth worked for a moment. I took a trembling breath. “It’s because I have a daughter. That’s why my life is important. The moment I drew my firearm, all I could think about was Rebecca. I couldn’t stand the thought of–”

“Do you think, that because you’ve chosen a colorful family, you’re suddenly exempt from your actions? Would you be saying the same thing if Jamal had been white?”

“Enough!” I shouted, louder than I had intended. A hush fell across the set as my mouth worked for a moment. I took a trembling breath. “It’s because I have a daughter. That’s why my life is important. The moment I drew my firearm, all I could think about was Rebecca. I couldn’t stand the thought of–”

“Why it matters

Stories like these are important for understanding tragic events like police shootings. Whether fictional or real, they prompt readers to think more deeply about what has happened. Often things are much more complicated than they appear at first glance. Creative writing can be used to promote discussion on these events that might not occur from real life reports. Personal emotions and thoughts are often left out of the official reports, and the people being represented can become dehumanized. By creating a narrative structure that mirrors these events, a writer can use fiction to bring back that human element. It isn’t meant to detract from the tragedy of these events, but amplify it. Most officers don’t want to take a life anymore than someone wants to lose theirs.

The reasons for the outcomes of these situations can be hard to comprehend. When race is involved, it can become an easy scapegoat. Sometimes it is a motivating or aggravating factor. Sometimes it isn’t. I wanted this story to convey that idea and show how tragic these events can truly be for everyone involved.

CONCLUSION

By writing this story, I wanted to show the weight of taking a life, regardless of race. An ambitious idea, but one worth pursuing. For that reason, I left the fatal encounter until the latter portion of the story to keep the focus on the officer himself instead of the shooting. When a shooting happens, there is almost always sympathy for the person who is shot and the person who pulled the trigger is viewed as a perpetrator. I wanted to illuminate how convoluted the idea of the victim can actually be in these situations. It isn’t meant to detract from the tragedy of these events, but amplify it. Most officers don’t want to take a life anymore than someone wants to lose theirs.

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WHY IT MATTERS

Stories like these are important for understanding tragic events like police shootings. Whether fictional or real, they prompt readers to think more deeply about what has happened. Often things are much more complicated than they appear at first glance. Creative writing can be used to promote discussion on these events that might not occur from real life reports. Personal emotions and thoughts are often left out of the official reports, and the people being represented can become dehumanized. By creating a narrative structure that mirrors these events, a writer can use fiction to bring back that human element. It isn’t meant to draw sympathy for every perpetrator, but rather to remind the reader that they are still people. They make their choices for different reasons, right and wrong. In these situations it can be easy to forget that.