

A Hopeless Time

By

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A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his neck.

"You see what you get nigger!"

The man, rope chaffing around his neck, could hear deep southern American voices behind him.

"You come to this town, this pure town dressed up in your white suit, trying to pull off the look of a white man? Well this is what you get, cos this is what you should get."

The water flowed fast as the man tried to think of anything except his daunting fate. He looked up at the tree he was attached to and noticed the branch was worn from previous victims. He heard footsteps coming from behind him and was met with a man face-to-face. He was wearing a white sheet over his entire body, including his face. He could only see the blacks in the man's eyes through slits in his hood.

"One thing I make sure of is that the nigger gets a good look at his killer's eyes, so he gets to look into the eyes of justice."

Slowly, the man lifted his hood revealing as many crevices as the cliff edge that led to the flowing water below them. Instantly, the bound man recognised

him. He was the priest at the local parish. If he hadn't have felt hopeless before, he did now. If a man of the cloth could do this, he had no chance. The priest unleashed a humiliating globule of phlegm that landed on his face. Laughs from behind him were heard. He was surrounded. The man put his hood back on and then raised his arm. With his senses heightened, he could hear footsteps approaching from behind. It was time. The bound man closed his eyes and in doing so, squeezed a single tear which rolled down his trembling cheek. An image of his wife flashed up before him until it was distracted by the sound of a car. He couldn't see it, the road was behind him. All that was in front of him was water. The car pulled up, the engine turned off, the car door opened and then slammed shut. The local priest spoke first.

“Hello Officer, is there anything we can help you with?” The man, just about to die, suddenly became the most grateful man on the planet.

“Actually, there is something you can help me with.”

“And that would be, officer?” Their deep southern accents pierced through the imprisoned man's ears.

“I was just wondering what right you have to tie this man's hands together, tie a noose around his neck and then push him over the edge of this cliff...” The officer stepped into the eye line of the condemned man, who tried to catch his smile in desperation. The officer smiled back and then turned to the man in white, shook his hand and concluded “...and not invite me to this

party!" They both spat laughter as the man accepted his doom and began to pray.