

Cumbersome Box of Inequity

By: Alexandra Ceurvorst

I write on this wall now, hoping that my story won't go unheard. I step back to admire my masterpiece, contemplating each part. My cramping, throbbing hand aches of overuse. My torso is still gushing blood. At this time, I would have traded with the guard for Aspirin, but I think that I have nothing left to exchange. I will just have to distract myself from the discomfort. Black writing lines my jail cell. Each word symbolizes struggle and pain. Now I will rest, and escape the moaning of the perishing inmates neighboring me, I, soon to be one of them.

3 Hours Earlier:

A blanket of fog hangs over Birmingham. It conceals everything in the bus shelter for blacks. The high rises have escaped in the brume. If a tourist were to arrive here blindfolded, they wouldn't even be able to tell you that the Birmingham Town Hall was directly in front of them.

I realize that the bus has arrived when a swarm of people start to hover around the curb. My hand brushes the elbow of a white as I push my way to the front. He bursts out in a hysterical manner, cursing and calling me a nigger several times. I turn to give him an apologetic expression, but I have lost him in the mist. I slide my coin into the plastic box and take my seat. The bus continues on, until we are five blocks away from my destination. Six more passengers board, filling it to capacity. As we start to roll forward, I see a young, white woman chasing us. She has to be dangerously close in order for me to be able to spot her.

"Sir," the words puncture my lips before I can stop them. "There is a white woman trailing the bus." He looks at me through his expansive mirror with disgust. Even after three years of riding the same bus, he still has a burning hatred for me.

"Thank you," the petite woman gasps. Her blue eyes search for an open seat, but come up empty. Then they quickly glance back at the bus driver. He towers over her, his wolf like eyes on the prowl, too.

"Take the nigger's seat," he states plainly. I am not surprised that he would say something like this. Using my best acting skills, I pretend to be asleep. My hands neatly folded in the ruffles of my skirt, my head cocked to the side, resting gently on the seat, and my face completely relaxed and motionless, or at least I pray that this is how it looks. My thinking behind this is that if they believe that I am asleep, I will be able to keep my seat and not be late to work. I can't afford to lose my job. The next thing I know, I am being verbally abused. I even feel a couple of vigorous kicks. I simply stay put, cringing at each blow to my ankle. Things quickly escalate due to my drive to stay idle.

The police drag my motionless body down the jagged stairs. This is sure to leave a handful of scars on my legs. They of course, pay no attention to the fact that my skirt is inching up. I bet that my armpits would be sore from the tight grip of the policeman if my natural anesthetic, shock, hadn't kicked in. Tears wash over my face like an ocean wave, and it is clear that I am no longer in control of my emotions. Spectators lull around the scene, excited to watch my death, and it's quite possible that they will get what they want.

I come to, and I find that I am in a jail cell, drenched in my own blood. It is sticky on my skin, except for my torso, where I can feel nothing. As I lift up my shirt, a gaping wound is revealed. I realize that I don't have much time, so whatever I plan to do, must be done quickly. The guard approaches and I make him a deal, my silver wedding band for a pen. Without hesitation, he hands it over.

I lay lifeless on the stone, jail floor, but have not entirely disappeared from this world. My soul rests in the words. I will touch hearts with my form of peaceful protesting and go on to help lift the cumbersome box of inequity.