

Anthony Johnson

### Outlast

For as long as Jimmy could remember, it had been an unlucky spot. When he first moved from Puerto Rico and wore a wide-brimmed straw hat and a thick goatee, it was a flower shop. The people in the know, the old-timers who were involved in the separatist movements and for whom lies were about the proximity they once worked with Albizu Campos, knew as a matter of course that the place was sustained by performing Santeria ceremonies. Then, it was a place that served tacos – nothing more than just a large, oily stovetop and a couple of stools. This was before Mexicans really started moving into the neighborhood, though, and Jimmy saw them more as something to make fun of. He and his friends would mock their accents when they ordered, and joke with the cooks by drunkenly singing famous rancheros, purposely off-key. The shop wasn't protected by bulletproof glass the way the Chinese would have done, and it was more or less robbed out of existence. Jimmy and his friends weren't the culprits, but the generation below them – Jimmy's nephew and his crew who were just kids when arriving in New York – seemed to be coming up without morals, and without having Puerto Rico to dream about returning to. Then came a grocery store that was really just a front for a numbers spot. Jimmy spent hours upon hours each day posted outside this establishment, drinking not-so-discreetly out of a paper bag, and awaiting the next round of winning numbers to be announced. It had become more convenient to do so rather than going back home between rounds. Jimmy,

always tall and very wiry, developed a paunch. After a random act of policing, the numbers spot was closed down and the numbers runners were pushed back on to the street. With the runners out on the sidewalk, Jimmy's loitering moved locations as well. The number runners attracted additional police activity and a number of Jimmy's friends had been picked up by police for drunkenly loitering, but then imprisoned for other things, many not returning home until years later, changed. A drug spot moved into the storefront, under the guise of its being a sparsely stocked grocery store.

Jimmy took the opportunity to establish himself among the true alcoholics who hung out outside *Bonito Bakery* across the street, which sold a strong cup of coffee, and was next to a liquor store. The guys out there stood around for as long as the liquor store was open, and drank coffee when not drinking alcohol. The amount of coffee they drank supported *Bonito Bakery*, but that support was offset by the wall of deterrent to other residents by their slurring behavior and lascivious comments. The grocery store/spot remained for the remainder of the 80's and into the 90's until it was busted. The store re-opened as a no-name, fast-food burger place that sold few burgers and many nickel and dime bags of marijuana. When this spot was closed down in a police raid, a legitimate burger place opened in its stead, luring Jimmy back across the street to hang out. He considered the crew outside the bakery to be associates rather than friends, and though he liked his drink, he couldn't keep up with that bunch; and he found some of their actions to be underhanded, like the rough way they spoke to the liquor store clerks – Jimmy found it unnecessary and was glad to be back across the street. The legitimate burger spot, though, was not successful and closed after a short while. The space was empty for a while, then, for a time, it was rented every spring by Jackson Hewitt. This lasted until there was a shootout outside the offices, a bullet crashed through the window, killing an employee.

The next tax season, Jackson Hewitt moved their offices around the corner, onto 116<sup>th</sup> street. By this time, Jimmy had taken his act to his stoop. Alcohol and age had begun to show up in his appearance and his gait. His beard was nearly white, his face more withdrawn, his paunch more pronounced. The window of the store front had its hole taped over and then boarded up, the store left vacant until the *New Harlem Café* opened in 2008.

By the time *New Harlem Café* opened, people did not think much of the spot as being one of malfortune. Jimmy's generation knew "That place was cursed since the 70's. They was doing Santeria there or some shit. They was selling flowers, but also yerba mala for ceremonies." But, among the crew stationed outside *Bonito Bakery*, older, with canes, wheelchairs, unshaven, free hand gripping a bottle, when talking about *New Harlem Café*, luck was not often the subject. "They gentrifying the whole city. Maybe the salads and shit are better for health, but it's worse for culture." Because, while the vacant space did nothing for anyone, the fact was that *New Harlem Café* catered to the mostly white, middle class set that had, when crime became relatively less widespread, begun moving into the neighborhood and paying rents that landlords could never get from the older, Puerto Rican generation, yet were cheap compared with places like the Upper East Side. For his part, Jimmy had paid the same exact rent, subsidized by section 8, for the past 20 years, and stayed so faithful to his block that he never even saw *New Harlem Café* until it was open, having missed the months of construction.

Around the neighborhood, marches and rallies were held, poorly but passionately attended, demanding that affordable housing be prioritized. Local politicians had to choose sides, or risk being seen by some as a "sell-out" and campaigned against on those grounds. After the risk was calculated, however, it was decided to allow more

luxury real estate development. “What the people don’t understand,” said one local politician, “is that with the influx of the money into the neighborhood, everyone’s quality of life will rise.” After all, plenty of Jimmy’s longtime neighbors were happy to see more money injected into the neighborhood. Not that they would ever touch any of it, but, after seeing themselves for years through the eyes of these middle class residents (via representations of themselves in the news and on TV) as pariahs of sorts, some were flattered to finally feel wanted. “Whoever thinks the white people should leave are estupidos. They should be taking notes on how to live.”

Jimmy’s block was no exception to the controversy. There had been a time when the halfway house across the street was not yet built and the area was a large vacant lot. Also, the schoolyard down the block attached to the elementary school was used as a place to buy and sell crack. Across the street from that elementary school was a middle/high school. The older kids from the middle/high school fought a lot - gang brawls seemed a terrifying but weekly ritual - the extra drug trade endangering the welfare of the elementary school kids. Still, when the school was closed down for poor performance and construction violations in the early 90’s, it was not seen as a positive development for the community. “Some of the kids were bad, but closing the school don’t change that.” The building remained abandoned for years, windows breaking and not being replaced; a massive fortress for illegal activity. By the mid to late 90’s, however, crack was not as big an issue. The halfway house was completed in 2000, and while its residents were occasionally rowdy, the building itself, with its large, open lobby, was an upgrade over the tenements of the rest of the block. Then, early in the first decade of the 2000’s, the building on the corner, which had been abandoned since the 80’s, and crumbling brick by brick ever since (a scaffold was put up on that side of the street in 1997 and left there to catch falling parts) was remodeled and made into a low-income housing building, then quickly populated by Mexican families. As to why there were no Puerto Rican families living there, it was theorized by

Jimmy's friend, Ramon, that, "We got our own shit." By the time that building opened, work had begun on the middle/high school to convert it to a building of luxury rentals. When the protestors came down Jimmy's block to distribute their literature, they found an ally, theoretically, in Jimmy, but Jimmy had no interest in protesting or marching. The protestors were Puerto Rican, but, "[He] don't know them."

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Jimmy woke up to an argument between a pedestrian and a driver. Both had moved on by the time Jimmy poked his head out of the window. Without putting any water on his face or trimming his broad mustache, he put on a sweat suit and sandals and went outside to sweep the sidewalk in front of his building. The air was light for a summer day, and there was garbage out there from the previous night. Jimmy was not the super of the building, but he used to be, and he would still be "if it wasn't for [my] health," a reference to the heart attack he once had, necessitating a pacemaker. He was no longer up for the heavy lifting of garbage, but occupying and taking care of the space directly outside the building gave him a sense of ownership over his life. Saying a quick prayer in front of the mural of his deceased nephew, painted on the wall of Jimmy's building, indicated that he was officially awake.

Jimmy's nephew died in the early 90's in a gun battle on the sidewalk outside his building. He was walking home from playing dominoes at Jimmy's, just exited the building, in fact, when his enemies spotted him from a passing car and shot and missed. Jimmy's nephew shot back, missed, but was then shot by return fire. One of the gunmen then got out of the car, approached Jimmy's nephew's already dead body and shot three times directly into its face in order to force a closed casket funeral. That the gunman had no second thoughts about exiting the car and

prolonging the episode was testament to the lack of police presence, or interest, in East Harlem in the early 90's. After the mourning period and the unsuccessful search for the killer and Jimmy's inability to enact any vengeful response, his other nephew, Hector, went to jail, and Jimmy ceased trusting people, separating himself from the *Bonito Bakery* crowd. He went to the guy on 113<sup>th</sup> who breeds dogs, and got himself a puppy – a black Akita, and began getting old.

Seventeen years later, he was old by most objective standards, and waking up to sweep every morning was no easy task. Plus, in the past few days, the dumpster down the street, parked at an angle to the curb, hadn't been emptied. The garbage was now overflowing out of the dumpster onto the sidewalk. The stench, unbearable, especially if a breeze came by. The smell, the garbage, the dumpster: these were not problems that sweeping away some leaves and cigarette butts could solve. But, the point was routine – routine performed each day a bit worse, at his age; an extra speck of dust unnoticed here, a pain noticed there. Taking a break from sweeping, Jimmy let his dog out to roam the street, hoping he was aware enough not to step in the newly created dustpiles. The dog limped over to the garbage dump, and too tired to return immediately, lay down. Jimmy whistled for him, but the dog just moved his ears.

Ramon's schedule of arrival a bit more erratic: "I don't even know when he'll show up. Don't matter. I just sit here anyway." And he was sitting there, on the stoop of his building, unpainted for years, the surface already sticky after a night of rain. Here Jimmy sat, and here Ramon approached him with coffee from *Bonito Bakery* up the block. They both had cups of coffee and Ramon pulled up a folding chair, which Jimmy stashed behind the garbage cans in front of the building. They preferred coffee from *Bonito Bakery* "because they do it Puerto Rican style" as opposed

to the newer, *New Harlem Café*, which was white. Well, the owner spoke Spanish, but she was from Spain. The staff was mainly younger Puerto Ricans, but still, it was different. It was a class thing. All of the white people who had recently moved into the neighborhood went to *New Harlem Café*. All of the older Puerto Ricans went to *Bonito Bakery* and stood outside of it endlessly, drinking and commenting. Bonito's coffee was Puerto Rican – a bit stronger than the American drip coffee served at *New Harlem Café*, and with steamed milk all the time. *New Harlem Café* boasted track lighting and music played off of the I-Pod of one of its employees. Bonito hadn't renovated in years and sported a gumball machine with plastic prizes peppered in with gum no doubt hard as pebbles.

The two sat, drinking their coffee and without too much conversation. They watched and nodded at passersby – people on their way to work, shuffling themselves down the street. Despite the early hour, they still managed compliments for the ladies, “God bless you mami!” – even the white ones, though they didn't give any response except to look more intently straight ahead. The Puerto Rican ones would at least, sometimes, smile or look over. Increasingly, most people wore earphones anyway and didn't hear their comments. Still, there were some neighbors – mostly new ones – whose passing by only elicited sorrowful shakes of the head. Jimmy and Ramon, having gone unnoticed or ignored like urban lawn ornaments, knew what each other were thinking each time one of these new neighbors passed by: the old days, when someone like that would have been robbed, or not even there in the first place. There was a bit of nostalgia for that period of time, now that the prices were higher – now that it was so obvious, yet unspoken, that *Bonito Bakery* had only steamed milk and longevity to hold it up as a neighborhood pillar.

“They still haven’t cleaned up that sign.” Ramon reported, referring to the graffiti that had been spray painted on the sidewalk outside of *New Harlem Café* – scrawled in white paint on the concrete: “Whitey go home!” “Leave Spanish Harlem to Us!” The two snickered because they understood the sentiment. “Have you tried their coffee yet?” Jimmy asked. “Hell no.” The two sipped from their paper cups. Neither had tried *New Harlem Café*, and neither would. That much was certain. Also, neither knew who had written the graffiti. Jimmy, although spending most of his time on his stoop, had an impression that he was aware of the main neighborhood events. He attributed the graffiti to the housing protestors.

One of Jimmy’s upstairs neighbors came down. Jimmy stood up to let him pass. The neighbor was a new one, white, the first to ever move into Jimmy’s building. Like most of this new crop, he wasn’t too friendly. Not outwardly mean, though, just awkward and not warm. He said “hello” sometimes, and sometimes did not. He tried to speak Spanish, despite Jimmy’s speaking to him in English. Mostly, if nobody said anything to him, he would just quickly walk by. This time, Jimmy tried to make conversation. He was not yet too drunk to do so. “Late work day?” The neighbor stopped. “Day off. Just going to get some coffee.” “You should try Bonito.” Ramon said, lifting his cup. The neighbor looked over at Ramon. “I like Bonito,” said the neighbor. “They don’t give enough, though. I need a lot today.” The neighbor looked away, down the street. “Is that your dog in the garbage?” “Yeah,” Jimmy said, and whistled again. This time the dog, using all his might, lifted himself up to his feet and began the process of hobbling back toward Jimmy. “See you soon.” Said the neighbor, and was off.

But, as the neighbor passed the dog, the dog stood in his way and sniffed at his leg and hand. Satisfied, he decided to follow the neighbor down the street. The dog used to follow familiar people down the street when he was young.

A cute, though big, young dog – his gait was bouncy then. Now, The dog struggled to keep up with this new neighbor, even though he was walking slowly. The neighbor looked back every now and again to see if the dog was still with him, and looked at Jimmy and put his palms upward as though he didn't know what to do. Jimmy smiled, remembering the first time this neighbor visited the building, with the realtor, to see the apartment. The dog was outside, alone, as Jimmy sometimes just let him out and watched him from his window, and the neighbor was reluctant to approach the building until Jimmy called the dog in. He was an old dog, but still big. Jimmy laughed, imagining what the neighbor would have done on the block in the eighties, when a stray dog would have been the least of his worries! “These people are not your friends,” the realtor had said to the neighbor, in a purposely loud voice, “no matter what you think.” The neighbor crossed the street to get to *New Harlem Café*, and surprisingly, the dog followed him. Jimmy craned his neck a bit.

After losing sight of the dog, a few minutes went by before the neighbor came back running, panicked, to collect Jimmy. “Jimmy. To think, the dog, bad!” “What?” “The dog of you. Sickness.” The panic in his voice communicated more than his broken Spanish. Jimmy responded in English, “How do you know?” “He’s just laying there.” “Maybe he’s tired. He’s old.” The neighbor didn’t respond, but stared wildly. Jimmy stood up and the two rushed over to *New Harlem Café* – the neighbor a couple of steps ahead.

When they reached *New Harlem Café*, Jimmy saw that, indeed, the dog was just laying there wet with sweat, his black fur matted down in waves, his body covering parts of the spray painted graffiti. Nobody had stopped to offer assistance. Jimmy was about to reiterate that the dog was probably ok, but the neighbor pointed out that “He just fell there and all that saliva came out of his mouth.” There was a puddle gathered outside the dog’s mouth, and the

dog had urinated while lying down. There was a reeking smell, worse than the combination of urine and dog – the smell of death, though the dog was breathing. Jimmy called forcefully to the dog. The dog struggled against the will of time, to its feet, though the legs wobbled too much for him to stand erect. Quickly, the dog fell to its stomach. Its legs splayed. Jimmy felt nervous and looked at the neighbor directly, “What did you do to him?” “No, nothing, nothing!” The neighbor waved his hands, swatting the idea away. Meanwhile, the dog was emitting a wheeze and repositioned himself on his side. Jimmy called to him again and the dog responded by kicking his legs straight out and keeping them there, still, as the rest of his body fell at ease. Jimmy looked to his neighbor, “He’s dead.” The neighbor nodded solemnly.

“Is that your dog?” The owner of *New Harlem Café* came out wearing an apron, speaking in Spanish. She appeared annoyed. “He’s dead.” Jimmy repeated, and began to become emotional, bowing his head, though he did not cry. The owner huffed and went back inside. The neighbor followed and came back out momentarily, holding a cup of coffee, which he had left at the counter while going to collect Jimmy. The puddle of urine the dog expelled in his final moments drifted in a stream over towards the graffiti. The smell of death was strong and the neighbor held his nose. Jimmy let a tear drip. By that point, the crowd across the street, at *Bonito Bakery*, had taken in everything that was going on. When Jimmy let a tear out, they laughed and called out, “Hey Jimmy, how’s your dog?!” Jimmy didn’t respond. The neighbor said that he was sorry, and walked back towards home. A few seconds later, the owner of *New Harlem Café* came out again. “We need to get this dog out of here. Do you want me to call sanitation?” “No.” Jimmy took out his phone and called Hector.

In the few minutes it took Hector to arrive in Raul's station wagon, some people, both Puerto Rican and white, passed by, holding their noses and saying "ewww." Nobody said "awww." Hector jumped out of the car, a silver SUV with tinted windows, which he left double parked on a narrow street, holding a box of garbage bags. Hector passed the bags to Jimmy, who proceeded to wrap the dog up. He was still upset, though Hector did not provide much sympathy. Hector waited by the car, on the lookout for traffic cops. When the dog's carcass was wrapped, the two of them lifted it up, and loaded it into the trunk and drove it back down the street, to the garbage dumpster in the middle of the block that hadn't been emptied in over a week. Using a swinging motion, the two of them tossed the carcass to the top of the pile that was still in the dumpster. Jimmy went home and washed up. Ramon was outside, still, sitting without an expression.

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One of Jimmy's neighbors, Tony, is a drummer in a bomba band, and when the weather was right and the mood hit him, he would call his buddies together to perform out on the sidewalk. This was one of those nights. Tony's wife set up the hibachi grill and prepared some hamburger patties, hot dogs, and corn on the cob. Other neighborhood women and wives helped out, while the men sat in a circle, drumming and singing, their voices straining and drunk, as the women cackled and tapped their feet, spread out on lawn chairs underneath the mural of Jimmy's nephew, the sounds and smells filling the air and temporarily overtaking those of the decomposing dog and other stench of the dumpster, overflowing nearby.

Soon, dancing would begin. Everyone ate from the grill, paid their respects to family members and friends they hadn't seen in a while. Word of these drumming gatherings got around as though through the wind – Tony's band had members from other parts of the neighborhood and from the Bronx, locations close enough to walk to, but far enough to discourage people from paying visits. The band members arrived with their neighbors and a reunion of sorts happened: Continuation of stories begun weeks ago, political discussions about Puerto Rico's potential statehood, oblique references to things that happened in the past. All of this accompanied by beers bought from the store on the corner at which Jimmy "never [had] to pay" and from the kegs of enterprising neighborhood supers operating out of their basements.

When the conversations were over, the drums sped to a pace and rhythm the people could not resist, gravitating toward the circle. Some lent their voices, rasped and longing, made passionate by alcohol – sweat, spit, beer spilling, and veins in the necks swelled, and the circle of drums beating faster, harder, more yelps, more small riffs – communication from one drummer to another. Outside this circle were the dancers. Grandchildren, loose limbed, getting the attention of adults for their efforts. Older people dancing a slower version of the steps they knew. A young woman dressed in an evening gown, dancing as if at a club – a relative, fighting off the advances of eager men until one proves he is up to the task of leading her in a salsa, careful that her spins do not take her off the curb's ledge, into the street. On the outskirts of this circle of competent dancers are some people standing around, wanting to be close to the music, but dancing only by nodding their heads, or swaying. These people were involved in conversations and watching the drummers and dancers at work. These people leaned against parked cars, still greeting familiar people they haven't seen in a while as they arrived. Beyond that ring of people were the rest of everyone who is there because it is an occasion. Teenage boys plotting, in a tight circle, to get the attention of a girl.

People selling drugs and pouring illicit, harder alcohol into plastic cups. People so trained to behave illegally that they cannot enjoy a nip without looking over their shoulders. Drunks arguing loudly, but unheard by the drummers. Jimmy was among these.

When everyone was younger, and the neighborhood was different, these drumming circles would last well into the night, and would really only end when something rowdy happened. Now, due to a deal worked out with the police, they ended promptly at 10. Still, it was plenty of time to celebrate. The compromise became necessary once neighbors began complaining of the noise the drumming created. The complaints went straight to the police, bypassing the drummers themselves, long time neighbors and friendly people though they may be. It was naturally assumed that the people who called the police must be new to the neighborhood, must be unaccustomed to the drumming, must not know how to communicate without the protection of the law, must be squeamish, must be white: The exact type of people who would look down on *Bonito Bakery*.

The young, new neighbor who inadvertently lured Jimmy's dog to his death earlier was on his way home from a nearby restaurant. As he passed by the drummers, the young man waved at Tony. Tony waved back and smiled from under his jibaro-style hat, a Puerto Rican flag patched on, "Let us know if we get too loud" he said, keeping rhythm, friendly. "No, no – keep going, I love this. This is why I moved here. Keep it up!" As he passed by, Tony's wife offered some food from off the grill. The young man accepted a burger and a piece of corn, though he had just eaten. He gushed and made humming noises over the flavors. This was not the first time that exact scene took place. The young man, wanting desperately to not appear to be the ones who had called the cops, the people wanting desperately to not have the cops come shut them down.

After eating, Jimmy came over and put his arm around the young man, expressing how happy he was to see him out, though indecipherable, his breath pungent, the words blurred, beads of sweat visible beneath his mustache. Jimmy led him over to the steps of the building, where he had been sitting. He went to offer a beer, but there were none remaining. The young man offered to buy the next six pack, somewhat awkwardly, “for your dog.” At the mention of the dog, Jimmy began to reminisce. The dog had been with him nearly since the days when his nephew was alive. The dog was with him when his mother was alive, and living in the apartment he currently lives in, and he was living upstairs in the apartment the young couple lives in now. That was when Jimmy was the super of the building, before he got too old and had a heart attack. He guided the hand of the young man to his heart, to feel his pacemaker. He drained the last of his beer defiantly, and made direct reference to his disobeying the doctor’s orders, “I’ll die anyway if I have to change.” The young man said that the dog had seemed to be a nice dog, and Jimmy countered with details of fights he had been in as a young pup. The details were lost in slur, and Jimmy switching from English to Spanish from word to word. He talked at length about Puerto Rico and dogs, and ageing. The young man stood politely and nodded when it seemed like he should. Tony, the drummer, passed by once to go inside to use the bathroom. “He’ll talk your ear off if you let him.”

They eventually went to the corner to get more beer, and the young man reiterated his offer to get the next six-pack because of the dog. Jimmy refused again and claimed that as long as they were neighbors, as long as he knew Jimmy, he would not have to pay when they went to the corner store. Jimmy said something to the guy at the register at the store as they walked out with six beers in paper bags, and six straws. Jimmy put his arm out when they got to the corner to let the young man know that it was not yet safe to cross the street. The light was red.

As Jimmy drank his next beer, he began to become more animated, as he jumped to the topic of the price of real estate in the neighborhood. Here the young man injected some words into the monologue to ask if Jimmy had known about the “affordable housing rally that took place on Lexington Avenue earlier?” Jimmy ignored this comment but paused for a second to let his vision refocus. He was confused. Why would this person be involved in the affordable housing protests? He waved his arms a bit more as he talked, and punctuated every sentence with a request to let it be known that he was understood. “Si”, from the young man, and then he went on. There was some sadness about the dog, and some animosity towards *New Harlem Café*. He tried to tell the story of the location, about the unluckiness of that spot, but he was not understood through his slur, through his language shifts, through his search for receding details about the struggles of Albizu Campos, through the worry that he was working himself up to a heart attack. The young man, at one point, said that he had to go to the bathroom. He went upstairs and did not come back down.

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There was a crime outside overnight, well past the time when the drummers had packed up and left. Jimmy went to his window to see what was going on, and then went outside to the stoop to get a closer look and to ask questions to the cops and talk to the others who had come outside. He was always curious about the police activity that took place on the block – especially after a murder. This was the location of his nephew’s death. Jimmy knew that his nephew’s mural would have to be replaced one day, by a newer deceased. He wanted to make sure that if it had to

happen during his lifetime, it was for something worthy. There was also genuine curiosity about the activity outside, as well as some plain nosiness.

A killing was a community event – especially at night. A killing during the day was something that any passerby could feign interest in. At night, only the true community members came to see what was going on. At a night-time event like this, it was possible for Jimmy to believe that nothing had changed in the neighborhood, or if it changed, it was all linear, from within. Outside, the same ageing Puerto Ricans who had been around to watch Jimmy’s nephew bleed to death on this very sidewalk were milling. Some Mexicans were there too – the ones who had been around for a while. As for the English speaking newcomers, Jimmy could see that their lights were still out, or they emerged momentarily on the 4th floor of the building across the street, on the 3rd floor of the building next door, as shadows behind their curtains, or tentative, peeking eyes. Many people of all types simply did not wake up at all, able to sleep through the disturbance. For them, the morning would bring a normal day.

Jimmy’s reasons for attending every crime scene that he could included the fact that he was absent from that of his nephew. The shooting took place right outside of Jimmy’s window. Jimmy owned a gun. But, Jimmy was passed out drunk on the floor of his living room, next to his couch, having not made it all the way there. He felt guilty – as though if he weren’t drunk, he might have been able to help. He stopped drinking for a short while, until the depression over what had happened truly set in.

In this case, his nephew’s legacy would remain intact. The killing had taken place on the corner. The police activity outside the building, in front of the mural, was only because the shooter had chosen this location to ditch his gun. It

was underneath a parked car and the police had roped the area off. There was no danger, so the atmosphere was pleasant. Tony and the drummers had cleaned up the sidewalk before disappearing for the night, but some of the same revelers were out, discussing what a nice time they had all had. “You ok, Jimmy?” The police worked slowly and filled out paper work, some with hands covering their noses – the smell of barbeque long gone. More police cars arrived, lights flashing, but when the cops stepped out, there was nothing for them to do. They would most likely not solve the crime, and they were under little pressure to do so. The dog smelled, perhaps stronger than the rest of the garbage combined, but the atmosphere was light. Nobody familiar had been killed, and the cops did not question anyone. The message in the graffiti had not been acted upon.