

Family Photo

by Kia Corthron November 2016

[TISH fools with a cell phone.]

TISH

[Muttering to herself:] Fifteen twenty-three. Fifteen twenty-three. Fifteen twenty-three.

[Sets the phone away from her, prepared to video-record herself. Looks out into the audience: the "camera."]

TISH

Hi! I'm Tish Fuller, and I'm in the twelfth grade, and, um... *[indicating behind her:]* That's my brother. *[Chuckles nervously.]* Mo, that's my brother Mo. Fuller. Michael Fuller. In the casket. *[Pause: What to say next? Then:]* The funeral director, she said we could, the *immediate family* could have a few minutes alone with him before... My mom and dad are outside, they were just here, I told the funeral lady I'm bringing in my camera, she didn't even blink! Guess she's seen it all! *[Chuckles. Then looks behind her, sobers.]* We don't know what happened. He never... Never in any trouble, no... No record. *[Beat.]* We were at a party. Tanya Kellers', last Saturday. Mo's curfew was midnight, I saw him leave. Eleven-thirty. *[Pause.]* We don't know what happened. The police said robbery, or assault. Mistaken identity but the police said gun, or his phone looked like a gun, it keeps changing fifteen twenty-three. *[Beat.]* We don't believe he had a gun. We don't *he'd never been in any trouble before* we don't believe he had a gun. *[Pause.]* Before this party he and I woulda come home together, but I argued. To my parents I stated my case: "I'm a senior! He's a

sophomore! My curfew should be later!" fought em till I wore em down, fought em till I won, I won. So. Eleven-thirty I glimpse Mo waving at me from the door but I got to stay another hour, I half-waved back cuz I'm with Luis Morales, last time I see my little brother but I'm smile-talking with Luis Morales I barely turn to Mo I got to stay out an hour later *I won.* [Pause.] Walking home by himself, shouldn't've taken more n twenty minutes but... Nobody there. No witnesses, no one around to make a video, whenever you hear people saying how awful it all is, "*If I see one more video of a black man or black woman or black child killed by police,*" think of how many times that must happen *not* on camera, I got an A in Statistics and Probability, think *exponential.* [Beat.] My friend. It happened to her too, her brother. Three years ago and *still* the authorities won't let the family see the police report. A week for us, we haven't yet seen the police report, we keep asking they keep giving excuses. All alone. My brother all alone no one to video fifteen twenty-three, all we know's fifteen twenty-three: fifteen years old, twenty-three shots. [Pause.] Well. I got my camera *now.* From here on out I video *everything.* [Picks up phone, goes to casket, begins un-buttoning her brother's shirt. Smiles:] I know you never liked wearing suits, Mo, but I sure couldn't have unbuttoned your T-shirt! [Chuckles, then gasps upon seeing her brother's bullet-ridden chest. Then begins moving the camera up and down the mutilated body.]

Dedicated to the memory of Joseph Kenall Glenn of Grambling, Louisiana, who was twenty-two years old when he was killed by police on December 29, 2013. This piece is fictional but the story of Tish's friend's brother is true, as relayed to me by Joseph's sister Tiffany Glenn: despite numerous requests, to this day Joseph's family still hasn't been shown the police report.