

# 1:00 am, a story

Karen Mitchnick

1966

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story is a true one and illustrates the truth that police brutality in Detroit is not a myth. It is not entirely a black man's problem either as this story points out. Solid oak is colorblind. It only sees red.

We were walking down Woodward thinking about which all-night movie to see. It was 1:00 in the morning and cold. We were walking fast with our heads down against the wind.

"Here's the Roxy. Can you read what's playing?"

"The Heroes of Telemark and Pirates of Blood River—anybody want to see those groovies?"

"No. Come on; let's walk down to the Colonial. Hurry up—it's so damn cold."

I didn't say anything else. Harley and Ben were already looking at two figures in the middle of Woodward. There was an old man, maybe 50 and drunk, and a Negro cop. He was a private cop and young looking.

The cop had the old drunk by his shirt and the old man's chest was exposed to the wind. We heard him say something.

"Are you trying to accuse me—!"

And then the cop hit him.

The old man yelled, "Nigger!"

The cop screamed. "Who you callin' nigger? Where you trying to go?"

He dragged the man into the pavement and the cars that were waiting just drove on.

"Who you callin' nigger?"

The young cop swung his nightstick through the air and smashed the old man in the mouth.

The old man was on his knees, his hands were up trying to protect his head. With blood dripping down his face, he cried.

Someone—a friend of the old man's, came up and said in a quiet, halting voice, "Hey, why don't you leave him alone?"

The young cop turned around.

"Shut up!"

And he swung his nightstick in a long arc that ended in the face of the old man's friend.

The manager of the theater came out and stood in front of his place and shouted.

"Get him in the parking lot. Take care of him in the parking lot!"

But the cop was oblivious even to the Big White Boss. He was totally involved in his orgasm of violence.

And then it was over. The man was dragged into the parking lot, the few spectators had slowly turned and walked on, and we were left standing there shivering. We just looked at the blood on the sidewalk and the old man's hat laying amid the broken glass ... not giving a damn about the pirates that were on Blood River.

# fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #7, April 1966

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