

Casualty of War

by

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FADE IN.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

A dingy hallway. Discarded soda bottles lie in corners. Paint chips from walls. Everything seems faded and grey.

TWO FEMALE COPS flatten themselves against the wall, outside a door. Their guns are drawn. Tension distorts their faces.

JANICE MITCHELL (30) reaches over and BANGS on the door.

JANICE

Open up! Police! We have a warrant!

She nods to her partner. Her blond ponytail bobs against her uniform.

MARIA RODRIGUES (35) nods back. Less willowy than Janice, she's short and squat - and built like a muscular tank.

Janice tests the door knob. It's unlocked.

The two charge in, and the world switches to slow motion.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The door bursts open, reveals a filthy apartment. Clutter on the floor, cracks on the walls.

JANICE (V.O.)

I remember the green army jacket. And I remember a rich aroma; a musky smell.

MALIK WILLIAMS (19) stands dead-center in the mess. African-American. Tall and thin.

JANICE (V.O.)

The kid spun around. He couldn't have been older than nineteen. Twenty.

Malik plunges a hand into his jacket pocket, and lunges at Maria and Janice.

MARIA

Drop the gun!

Janice takes aim, FIRES repeatedly.

JANICE (V.O.)

Of course, I shot him. Two well placed holes. One right aside the heart, the other a bit below his right shoulder. It's not like I was trying to kill him. It just looked like it was him. Or me. And it's not like in the movies - where I could've targeted his knee.

Malik goes down like a rock.

Janice holds the gun on him. Maria does a quick recon of the apartment. The place is cluttered. But empty.

Maria pulls out a radio.

MARIA

Backup needed. Suspect down. 146 Gunhill Road, Bronx.

Janice searches Malik's pockets, and pulls out a toy gun.

She hands the weapon to Maria, and gets down low on the floor. Malik's alive - blood spitting from his lips.

Janice holds him, and checks his pulse.

JANICE (V.O.)

He strangled on his own blood, the fluid filling his shattered lung long before the medics arrived. And I watched him. Held him, actually - in a small, dirty tenement on Gunhill Road, Room 34A.

PARAMEDICS and MORE OFFICERS burst into the room.

Malik's not moving anymore. Janice steps back as the medics take over.

JANICE (V.O.)

I distinctly remember thinking there really wasn't all that much blood. The little holes in his shirt were too small to have done so much damage to his lungs.

She looks down as Malik's loaded onto a stretcher. A smear of red soaks into the wood floor.

JANICE (V.O.)

Not very gory at all. Still, he died. His heart shredded by bullets. Ones that came from *my* gun.

EXT. CURBSIDE - DAY

Janice stands on the sidewalk, flanked by OTHER COPS.

SPECTATORS gather, and crane their necks to get a glimpse. Some of them start to CHANT as Malik's wheeled out on a gurney.

Fortunately, there's not much to see. The sheet covers Malik's face.

Lights flash on the ambulance, parked curbside. The stretcher's loaded. Last PARAMEDIC climbs in, and shuts the doors.

Janice stares at the ambulance as it pulls away.

JANICE (V.O.)

He never tried to say anything. There was no profound, final statement. And believe me, I half expected one. One minute I was holding him, feeling his body shudder. The next, his breathing had stopped and my nose told me he had died. He died. And I never heard him speak a single word.

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

Janice sits at a desk, talks (MOS) to a STAFF SARGENT. The man jots notes, regards Janice with professional sympathy in his eyes.

JANICE (V.O.)

His name was Malik Johnson, and he was pronounced DOA. Another casualty in the War on Drugs. Some say, killed due to his race.

The Sargent slides a form over to Janice.

JANICE (V.O.)

We lifted fifteen bags of Bath Salts from the apartment, as well as needles, rubber ties, and three grams of PCP. No question the kid was a dealer. He had a list of priors - most of them petty theft. IA confirmed that he'd been "armed" at the time I shot him. They ruled for "Officer Self Defense."

Janice shakes the Sargent's hand. He sadly watches as she leaves.

INT. INDOOR TRACK - DAY

Gray walls enclose a rubberized track. Janice runs a lap, drenched in sweat. Hair sticks to her forehead.

JANICE (V.O.)

Still, dammit, I'd never killed anyone before. After filing my report, I used three miles around the track to shake off the worst of the adrenaline. Then I took to the showers. Then left for home.

Janice stops mid-stride. She bends over, and HUFFS to catch her breath.

Then she heads for the exit. The metal door CLANGS shut in her wake.

INT. JANICE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Janice paces her kitchen, dressed in a cotton nightgown. She talks on the phone (MOS).

JANICE (V.O.)

At home, I called my Mom, to reassure her I was safe. I followed that up with a call to the boyfriend. We talked for two hours. Only thirty minutes of that was about the shooting.

In the living room, ANGRY CIVILIANS flash across the TV screen. The news scrawl declares: "Police killing." The group "#All Lives Matter" screams their protests.

Janice smiles thinly, hangs up the phone. Turns away from what she sees.

INT. JANICE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Janice crawls into bed, her movements old for her age. She pulls the comforter to her chin.

JANICE (V.O.)

I was exhausted, and went to bed early. Didn't take long for me to fall asleep. I was out, immediately.

INT. JANICE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Janice opens her eyes, and stares at the clock.

JANICE (V.O.)
At two o'clock, I woke up thirsty.
Couldn't get back to sleep.

INT. JANICE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Janice stumbles into the kitchen, eyes half shut.

Barefoot, she shuffles to the refrigerator door. She gropes inside, and retrieves a carton of OJ.

JANICE (V.O.)
I remember seeing a movie, where a lady
cop's attacked in her apartment, on her
way to the john. In the film, she dives
to the floor, pulls a gun from a thigh
holster, and comes up blazing.

Janice turns around to put the juice on the kitchen table.

Malik Johnson is sitting there. Two little, dried pink holes stain his Eisenhower jacket. He smiles.

Janice drops the carton. It hits the floor with a SPLASH, soaking her legs and nightgown, through to the skin.

JANICE (V.O.)
But me - I don't keep push daggers near
my pillow, or holsters under my lace
nightie.

Johnson makes a motion, as if to stand up. Janice GRUNTS, and stumbles backwards blindly.

JANICE (V.O.)
The apartment had been dark. Who could
say that I'd seen him clearly enough to
make a positive ID?

She stares at Johnson, frozen in shock.

JANICE (V.O.)
Though the question was moot. The kid did
die, no matter who was in my kitchen. A
sick joke by one of his friends?
Unfortunately, my gun was out of reach -
tucked safely away under my bed.

Janice gropes behind her. She grabs a bowl, and throws it at Johnson.

It passes through him, and hits the opposite wall.

Janice stares in disbelief. She grabs a spoon from the sink. She takes careful aim, and throws it at Johnson.

It lands between the bullet holes, and travels clean out his back.

JANICE

Shit!

She stops and stares - her mouth open.

JANICE (V.O.)

There's a phrase that horror writers use, called the "fool in the attic". You know, a family moves into a house, and hears demonic noises. They go up to investigate - alone and completely unarmed. The audience cringes, and screams at them not to do it. For the love of God and all that's holy. Please!

Janice stares down at the puddle of orange juice. Then up at Johnson. He's still there.

JANICE (V.O.)

I'd swear I'd never be that stupid. Then I decided to not run for the door. Curiosity took priority, over all.

Janice approaches the table hesitantly, ready to bolt. She settles into a chair, right across from Johnson.

JANICE (V.O.)

I didn't touch him. Didn't want to.

Janice picks up a salt shaker, and tosses it at Johnson. That goes through him, as well. She looks at him cautiously.

JANICE

Well, you haven't tried to eat my face. Guess there's more gravy about you than grave.

No response.

JANICE

Planning to quietly rot in my kitchen?

Johnson shrugs silently.

JANICE

You have to have *some* reason to be here. At least my subconscious thinks so.

I should've taken that Ambien. It's a lot nicer for my dreams.

Janice picks up the pepper shaker. She eyes it, then looks at Johnson. She puts the shaker down with a SIGH.

And begins to look irritated, as well.

JANICE

You can't play the martyr, Malik. I've seen all your priors.

Johnson smiles with blood encrusted teeth.

JOHNSON

What about them?

Janice leans across the table. She backs up and wrinkles her nose as a nasty smell hits.

JANICE

What about them? In 2011, you held up a convenience store. Shot the night clerk, nearly killed her dead. You got off that one on a technicality. You've been held on charges of battery, theft and rape. You aren't nice. That's exactly what I mean.

Johnson shrugs; slowed by advancing rigor mortis. Apparently.

JOHNSON

Yeah. I deserved the chair for Duane Reade. That girl never walked again. And those charges of rape? Those were true, as well.

Janice looks nervously at her flimsy nightgown.

JANICE.

Sweet guy. So what's your point?

JOHNSON

That it ain't got shit to do with what went down today. This time, you're the one that's in the wrong.

Janice stares at Johnson, bug-eyed.

JANICE

For shooting you?!?

JOHNSON

An innocent businessman, selling my wares. You busted in, I protected myself. You do believe in self-defense. Don't you - Officer?

Janice stares daggers at Johnson.

JANICE

Drug dealing's hardly harmless. Though I'm guessing you want to debate?

Johnson grins.

JANICE

Will you go away. If I argue and win?

JOHNSON

I'll go away even if *I* win. Or when you wake up, if that comes first. But you gotta agree to play the game.

Janice shoots Johnson a cynical look.

JANICE

What's in it for you?

Johnson shrugs. Bits of skin flake from his cheek.

JOHNSON

You killed me less than twelve hours ago. Don't you think you owe me the time of day?

Janice plucks at the wet fabric of her nightgown.

JANICE

You promise to leave?

Johnson holds up a cold, grey hand.

JOHNSON

Scouts honor. And I was one. When I was eight.

JANICE (V.O.)

And so I agreed. Whatever it took to get him out of my kitchen. Besides, he was really beginning to smell.

Janice folds her arms protectively across her chest.

JANICE

Fine, I'm listening. Take your best shot.
But make it quick. I'm *real* tired.

Johnson nods, the skin on his cheek translucent, laced with livid spider-web veins.

JOHNSON

You believe in freedom?

Janice stares at him, and waits for the follow-up Johnson has to say.

JANICE

Can you be a bit more specific? Please?

Johnson SIGHS. Air WHISTLES from his shattered lung.

JOHNSON

I mean, do you think people have a right to be free? To live their lives the way they want - as long as they don't mess with other people along the way?

JANICE

You mean, as long as they're not as violent as you've been?

Johnson leans back, teeth bared in a ghastly grin.

JOHNSON

Hey, I ain't gonna practice what I preach.

JANICE

Too general a statement. Give me an example. Something more - specifically.

JOHNSON

Okay. How about fucking?

He leers at Janice through increasingly filmy eyes.

JOHNSON

You'd have a problem if they outlawed pre-marital sex. Am I right?

A disturbed look crawls across Janice's face.

JANICE

Of course. You can't legislate morality. What's that got to do with anything?

JOHNSON

Even though it's potentially dangerous?
You can get HIV that way, you know.

JANICE

Still. If I - I mean, if anyone wants to
take that risk, that's their business. No
one else's. They're the ones that'll have
to face the consequences if they make a
mistake.

Johnson looks casually around the room. His eyes fall on
bottles of liquor on the kitchen counter, tucked
discretely in one corner.

JOHNSON

I see you drink J.D. You know, that stuff
rots your liver. It don't play well with
your judgement, either.

JANICE

A gift from a friend. I usually drink
light beer. And only on my days off.

Johnson looks at the bottle, then back to Janice.

JOHNSON

People have been known to do stupid
things when drunk. Criminal things, even.
You remember the Killian case you worked
over on Greenwich Ave?

JANICE (V.O.)

Mentioning Robert Killian? Now, that was
a majorly low blow. I'd made his
acquaintance during my second year on the
force. And I never could forget the
case...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ROBERT KILLIAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A grungy apartment, filled with Salvation Army furniture.

JANICE (V.O.)

Robert Killian was a lower class,
miserable son of a bitch. A father of two
that occasionally drove a taxi. When he
wasn't collecting unemployment.

ROBERT (42) sits on the couch, glass in hand. He's
scruffy and wears a plaid shirt with the tail pulled out.

The TV BLARES. A LITTLE GIRL (8) sits on the floor, and toys with a hand held video game.

JANICE (V.O.)

Killian wasn't technically an alcoholic. That is, he didn't have to have his fix just to get through the day. But whenever he felt he couldn't cope, he turned to alcohol to solve his problems. With virulently undesirable results.

Killian looks over at the girl. He stands up, and strolls toward her. He's huge, compared to her tiny frame.

JANICE (V.O.)

I got to know him after he'd lost his job, and went home to celebrate with a pack of Four Loko. Lacking a wife, he'd turned on his daughter instead.

Killian's shadow falls over the girl.

JANICE (V.O.)

When he found out he didn't fit, he used a table knife to cut her open.

There's a knife in Killian's hand. He looks at it, then back at the girl. She glances up, eyes innocent.

The vision goes mercifully to black.

JANICE (V.O.)

We put him away for twelve years. She's in a foster home now, still undergoing therapy for rape victims. Sick bastard. I wish I could've turned the knife on *him*.

END FLASHBACK.

Janice leans across the table and snarls.

JANICE

Killian had problems, and they had nothing to do with alcohol. What that bastard did has nothing to do with my ability to enjoy a drink responsibly.

JOHNSON

So, you don't believe in Prohibition?

JANICE

Fuck, no.

Janice sits back wearily.

JANICE

Then what do you want me to say? That I think folks should be allowed to have their own lifestyle, as long as they don't hurt other people? Fine. I'm all for it. I'm in.

She rolls her eyes at Johnson.

JANICE

Of course I believe in freedom. Why the hell do you think I joined the force?

Johnson shakes his head. And starts to look a touch transparent around the edges.

JOHNSON

So what's wrong with dealing? All I did was give people something they wanted. And needed, to get by.

JANICE

Something that could kill them.

Johnson shrugs innocently.

JOHNSON

It made them happy. So what if it killed them in the long-run? That's their business. Not yours. Little Ms. Privileged White Girl.

JANICE

You arguing for legalized suicide, as well?

A cold wind WHISTLES through the kitchen. The radiator kicks on, and TICKS quietly in the corner. Janice shivers - stares at her uninvited guest.

JANICE

It does become my business, when they're so addicted they knock off a convenience store to support their habit.

JOHNSON

(grins)

Not everybody does that. But ain't it nice that the laws have pushed prices so high people have to rob to get their fix? You know, I made Horse dirt cheap in my basement, and sold it for a 500% mark up. That allowed me to earn a great living. Up until recently, anyway.

Janice wrinkles her nose as she takes in Johnson's deteriorating smell.

JANICE

Drug dealing's not a victimless crime.
What about the children?

Johnson tries to pick up a glass of water on the table. His hand goes right through, like it's not there.

JOHNSON

Hey, I never dealt to kids. Too many narcs in the schools. But just because kids don't drink doesn't mean you should keep it from the parents. Same thing with drugs. So keep it illegal for the kids - no skin off my damned nose.

Janice stares at Johnson. The skin on his face starts to crack. Johnson fails to notice - or at least to care.

Janice looks wistfully towards the front door of the apartment. Then back at Johnson, defensively.

JANICE

You were breaking the law, then. How about that?

Johnson shrugs.

JOHNSON

Why should I care?

JANICE

Why -

The words catch in Janice's throat. She sits in silence.

JANICE

If you don't have law, you have anarchy.
Is that what you want? Mr. Johnson?

Flakes of skin peel off Johnson's cheek, onto the table.

JOHNSON

Hey, I got no beef with government in general. You got to have something in place to keep people from stealing my product. Or putting bullet holes in me, and my furniture.

Janice eyes Johnson cynically.

JANICE
So, what's your point?

JOHNSON
That there ain't no reason to respect the law, if what it says is wrong.

JANICE
And you're the one to make that decision for yourself?

Johnson grins. Cracks form at his mouth. A chunk breaks off - exposing blood covered bones and teeth. Flesh hangs from a sinew, drops to the table with a CLUNK.

JOHNSON
Don't second guess the government, 'cause it's got to know better than you? Good thing some people didn't feel that way, back during slavery. Or segregation, either. That's a funny thing to argue, especially coming from a woman.

His eyes flick to Janice's naked legs.

JOHNSON
A century ago, you would've been property. Your husband or your father wants to beat on you, that was their right. Nothing you could do about it. Or say.

He looks directly into Janice's eyes.

JOHNSON
Would you have put up with it?

JANICE
Of course not, but...

JOHNSON
But the law said it was okay. Who are you to take morality into your own hands?

Janice shifts in her chair, and looks uncomfortable. She shakes her head violently.

JANICE
Not a fair comparison. We're living under a different system now. If there's a problem, we can change it. This is a democracy. We *protect* rights.

Malik begins to look green around the edges. A bit bloated, as well. He shifts in his chair. His jacket RUSTLES softly.

JOHNSON

Ever see a lynch mob protect rights?
There was democracy back then, too. If
enough people like a law, it'll be
passed. But that don't make it moral.

Janice studies the exposed veins in Johnson's jaw. Something wriggles under the skin - a tiny little maggot.

JANICE

Next, you'll be saying you had a right to
shoot me... to protect your property from
getting "confiscated"?

Johnson leans back, an innocent look on his face.

JOHNSON

You said it, not me. But that's the best
way to phrase it.

JANICE

Oh, come on!

Outside, a bottle BREAKS on the sidewalk. Followed by indistinct CURSES from an unseen owner.

Janice looks over at Johnson, and catches him digging into an ear with his pinky. He wipes the wax off on his jeans, and beams at her across the table.

JANICE (V.O.)

As much as I hated to admit it, Johnson
had a major point. It wouldn't stand up
to cross examination. But a part of it
rang true, for me.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SQUAD CAR - DAY

A younger Janice sits behind the wheel. Her lips are pursed, eyes glued to the road. She looks quite unhappy.

OFFICER KENT D'ANNA (25) has enough excitement for both of them. He chats with a PROSTITUTE (35) in the back seat, a grin plastered across his face.

The prostitute doesn't look happy. Smearred makeup, tangled hair - a small scratch on one rouged cheek.

KENT

Next time, you should really think twice before beating up on the customer. Doubt he's gonna be back for seconds. And calling the cops is ill-advised given your profession. Don't you think?

The prostitute glares at Kent; flips him the bird.

PROSTITUTE

Fucking bastard tried to rape me.

Kent flashes a patronizing smile, turns it on Janice.

KENT

What, you mean he didn't pay?

Janice shoots Kent a look. They pull into the precinct parking lot.

JANICE

Kent...

Kent's smile doesn't waver. They exit the patrol car, lead the prostitute in cuffs towards the entrance.

Kent opens the door, and waves Janice in with the perp.

KENT

Don't worry, we're bringing him in, too. You two lovebirds can sort it out at the station. Press charges, if you want to.

The door CLANGS shut behind them. Almost like a jail cell.

INT. PRECINCT - CONTINUOUS

The door of a holding cell SNAPS shut. Through the bars, the prostitute looks pissed. Janice nods in her direction.

JANICE

They're processing the paperwork now. You should sit down. It'll be awhile before they take your statement.

The prostitute jumps to her feet, and glares.

PROSTITUTE

Nice partner you've got there, prissy bitch. You think he's got your back?

Janice smiles wanly. She touches Kent on the elbow, and leads him away from the cage.

She HISSES viciously in his ear, as soon as they're far enough away.

JANICE

You're a fucking moron, Kent.

Kent shrugs, eyes wide and innocent.

KENT

What?

JANICE

You should remember you're riding with a female cop before you start spewing garbage out of your mouth. You don't joke about rape, asshole. I don't care who you're talking to.

They talk as they walk. Out of the building - back towards the waiting squad car.

EXT. PRECINCT PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Kent leans against the vehicle's door.

KENT

Hey, all I said was I didn't see the problem. Profession she's in, she can look at it as working pro bono. And you know she's just trumping up charges 'cause the John stiffed her.

He pats Janice on the shoulder. She's not amused.

KENT

Relax. You take things too seriously. I was just having fun.

Janice steps in Kent's way - prevents him from entering the car.

JANICE

You think it'd be funny if I was raped?

Kent turns to Janice, face suddenly serious. A spark of genuine concern in his eyes.

KENT

I'd personally kill the bastard. After I stuffed his balls down his throat.

They settle into the squad car. They pull into traffic.
The engine PURRS.

KENT

But her, she's just a hooker. And she
broke the law. All I did was have some
fun.

They drive down the street in silence.

JANICE (V.O.)

It occurred to me later that if I'd been
a hooker and Kent had come to arrest me,
I would have felt no remorse in swinging
a lead pipe directly at *his* shriveled
balls.

Janice stares at Kent, a troubled look on her face.

JANICE (V.O.)

That wasn't hostility at Kent personally.
Okay - maybe it was, just a bit. But ever
since, I've always viewed prostitution
laws as anti-female, anti-sex... and
disrespectful of my rights in general.

The car passes through a run-down neighborhood. GIRLS
line the sidewalk, some of them clearly on the job.

JANICE (V.O.)

Somehow, I can't help look at it as a
bunch of male lawmakers telling women
what they can, and can't do with their
bodies. A woman can sell her time and
soul to an office. But she can't rent out
the use of other parts - for even a few
scant hours a day? You can fuck. You can
give it away. But if you try to make
money, it's criminal? Never understood
that point of view.

Kent grins at Janice, waves for her to smile. Janice
shakes her head. Troubled and very unamused.

JANICE (V.O.)

A few years later, I heard about a
prostitute that beat the hell out of a
cop trying to arrest her. She'd studied
Tae Kwon Do, and managed to give him a
bloody nose before they took her down.
They didn't go easy on her. But I
silently cheered when I heard the news.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JANICE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Modern-day Janice stares icily at Johnson.

JANICE (V.O.)

But could I understand the attitude that sometimes - under certain conditions - violence against cops could be right? Damn straight. Yes, I could. Which is why my retort to Johnson lacked some of the conviction I tried to put into the words.

Outside the window, a car passes. The radio BLARES.

JANICE

I'd pull the switch personally, for what you did to that clerk in Duane Reade.

Johnson grins in a self-satisfied manner. The HIP HOP radio fades away.

JANICE

You deserved to die, even if it wasn't for dealing Horse and Bath Salts. There's any number of other crimes to be accounted for. You know I feel that way. I always will.

Johnson raises an eyebrow. Rigor mortis prevents significant movement.

JOHNSON

I didn't expect to convince you.

Janice stands up and edges around Johnson; giving him wide berth.

She scoops up the fruit bowl, and chucks the salt shaker into it - along with the spoon.

She looks up at Johnson's back. Bloody exit holes riddle the jacket - a touch wider than the entry wounds.

She reaches out to touch his neck. Then pulls back at the last second, returns to her end of the table.

JANICE

What do you want? Your life back? I can't ever give that to you.

Johnson shrugs, remains silent.

JANICE

I thought we had an understanding. I agree to argue, and you leave. Remember, that was the deal?

(beat)

You've made your point. I don't totally agree with it. But consider it understood.

Johnson nods, imperceptibly.

Janice stands up. She places her hands on the back of a kitchen chair. She turns deliberately away, towards the cell phone on the counter.

JANICE

If you don't mind, I think it's time to call the police. This game's gone on long enough. Whoever the hell you are. So if you don't want to end up in jail, I suggest you leave. This instant.

JOHNSON (O.S.)

You're right. I'm leaving.

Janice SIGHS in relief and turns around. Her face drops.

JANICE

You're still there.

Johnson stands up. Joints CREAK and SNAP as he moves.

JOHNSON

Been good talking with you. Have a nice life. Nice you have *that* privilege.

He heads for the door - and walks through it. His neck bisects the dead bolts, creates the fleeting impression of decapitation.

Janice bolts to the door. She tears it open, and looks both ways down the hall. There's nothing to see. Johnson's gone.

INT. JANICE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Janice sits at the table, a cup of coffee trembles in her hand.

JANICE (V.O.)

After that, I did all the rational things. Pinched myself.

Changed into dry clothes. And kept myself
distracted. And busy.

INT. JANICE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Janice paces the kitchen. The washing machine RUMBLES
like an earthquake.

JANICE (V.O.)
Wasn't much point in calling the
precinct. What the hell would I report?
What the fuck would I say?

INT. JANICE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Janice climbs gingerly into bed.

JANICE (V.O.)
I got to sleep around 5AM, and dreamed
quite fitfully. Though not about ghosts,
thank heaven.

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - DAY

Dressed in uniform, Janice flashes a badge at an
ATTENDANT. He leads her to a vault, built flush into the
wall.

JANICE (V.O.)
The next day, I went to the hospital.
Just to check that Johnson was still
lying cold and stiff in the morgue.

The attendant opens a drawer. He pulls back the sheet.
It's Johnson.

JANICE (V.O.)
He was. They'd even chopped him up
already, after they'd found an organ
donor card in his wallet.

INT. PRECINCT - LATER

Janice sits at a desk, and rifles through piles of paper.

JANICE (V.O.)
He had no relatives who resembled him.
One possible, similar match - but he'd
died a few years earlier in a DWI.

There was nothing else that explained my strange encounter.

EXT. PRECINCT PARKING LOT - LATER

Janice walks out the door of the building. She waves to Maria, parked several feet away.

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maria and Janice drive along the street, talk MOS.

JANICE (V.O.)

Converted? Me? I still can't buy it. I hear the advocates of legalization, and I cringe. There's something wrong with it. I've seen too many addicts to think that legalization is the way to go. Sure it's their decision - but what a waste of a human life...

They drive down a street filled with TEENAGERS and BLARING MUSIC.

Janice and Maria stop, and lean out the window. The teenagers walk away slowly, all in opposite directions.

Maria shakes her head. The car starts up again. They drive past GIRLS, dressed in halter tops and mini-skirts.

JANICE (V.O.)

Then I think about my views on prostitution, and I wonder if I'm being hypocritical. I see the violence, and I know it's due to the high price of drugs. Legalize it, and you'll get rid of the gangs. If you get past the politics and the hype, it's that simple. Really. I killed a kid with a toy gun - after I kicked in his front door. One that just wanted to sell drugs... to eager, willing neighbors.

The car passes another CLUSTER OF TEENAGERS. Nothing suspicious going on. But there are a lot of them.

EXT. PRECINCT PARKING LOT - EVENING

The sun sets as the squad car pulls into the parking lot. Janice grins at Maria, looks at her watch.

JANICE (V.O.)

But I just can't consider the alternative. Want Crack? Buy some at the local CVS. Absolutely ludicrous to imagine. I'll never be an advocate of legalization. I'll never look at a dealer with respect.

Janice exits the car, and walks towards the entrance.

JANICE (V.O.)

Is it necessary to mention I never told anyone? They would have diagnosed me as insane. Discharged me from duty then and there. What a way to get recycled from the force. But when I finally switched to the Feds three years later, I stayed as far away from D.E.A. as I could possibly manage. And I voted independent in the next election. Definitely not Tea Party. But Libertarian anyway.

FADE TO BLACK.