



# RAYFLECTION

Stray thoughts from the entertainment capital of the world



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It was a long time ago. Back then, I was about nine and like most kids, wanted to belong. We didn't have gangs then, just guys who hung out with each other. Oh, I wanted to belong. Being a tag-a-long just wasn't the same as being one of the guys.

The bully of the neighborhood was one of the guys named Mason. I suppose with a name like that you either picked on others or were picked on yourself. One Saturday he called over the fence that the guys were going down to Swift Creek to goof around and did I want to come along.

Did I want to come along? Absolutely! Now the guys goofing around was nothing serious, just kid stuff that at worst led to scolding.

So, The Guys, me included, headed down to Swift Creek. Now Swift Creek was one of those areas you didn't ask permission to go down to. It was fed by the Mississippi with a narrow inlet where the force of the mighty river thrust tons of water through an opening that was just fifty feet or so across. Thus the name Swift Creek.

We sauntered down the Market Street hill. The old Peerless Brewing company was on our right, and we tossed rocks at the few remaining unbroken windows. As we headed down to the old wooden bridge spanning Swift Creek, Mason pointed out a cat sitting on the bridge raiting cleaning its fur.

"Here, punk, see if you can hit that cat". He handed me a rock and stood back. The other guys teased me about not even getting it the twenty or so feet to the cat. They shoved me around to the front of the group and kept up their tirade as I looked at the bridge and the black cat, sitting nonchalantly cleaning its white paws. Sitting there as if she had no fear of my feeble toss.

Hitting that cat was the last thing I wanted to do. But The Guys kept pushing and clamoring for me to throw it, throw it, throw it.

Anxious to belong, I reared back and threw as hard as I could. I actually hoped I would miss. I mean, at that age, I could barely throw a

fit, much less a rock.

The rock flew straight for the cat. It struck just below its rib cage and the cat tumbled off the bridge.

"No, No!", I yelled and ran as fast as I could for the bridge. The Guys were cheering my aim. All I could hear was the sound of the cat splashing into Swift Creek.

I reached the edge of the bridge and scrambled, fell, then crawled down the embankment to the rocky shore. My eyes searched frantically for the cat while tears streamed down my cheeks.

"Please, kitty, please!" I screamed at the swirling waters.

Just downstream in the middle of the creek, I saw movement. A pair of white paws broke the surface followed by a scrawny head. The mouth was open as it splashed in panic against the surging water.

As I ran along the shore to get even with the cat, I grabbed a dead branch that I hoped would be long enough to reach her.

I thrust it out into the murky waters and cried, "Catch the branch, kitty! Please catch the branch."

I'll swear that the cat looked at me and tried to swim toward the branch. It tried and tried until Swift Creek pulled her under for the last time.

Stunned, I stood there weeping, branch in hand. The words my pastor quoted rang loudly in my ears;

"What you do unto the least of these, my brothers, you do also unto me."

Submitted by

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