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Then comes the day Justyce goes to drive with her best friend Manny, the windows rolled down, the music appeared - the way up, sparking the fury of the white off-duty police officer next to them. Words fly. Shots fired. Justyce and Manny are caught in the crosshairs. In the media, it's Justyce who's under attack. Alive and strong. -Booklist, Starred Review a visceral portrait of a young man clearing with ugly, persistent violence of social injustice. -Publishers Weekly Strong, agonizing. -JOHN GREEN, #1 New York Times bestselling author Turtles All the Way DownRaw and Gripping. - JASON REYNOLDS, New York Times bestselling co-author of All American BoysMust-read! -ANGIE THOMAS, #1 The New York Times bestselling author of Hate U GiveRaw, captivating, and undeniably real, Nic Stone joins industry giants Jason Reynolds and Walter Dean Myers as they boldly address American race relations in this amazing #1 New York Times bestseller, the William C. Morris Award Finalist. 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She misses her shoe, and the contents of her purse are scattered around her like the insides of an overstretched popper. She knows she's drunk on stone, but this is too much, even for her. Jus shaking his head and remembering the verdict all over his best friend Manny's face as he left Manny's house 15 minutes ago. The WALK symbol appears. As she approaches, she opens her eyes, and he waves and pulls out her headphones just in time to hear her say, 'What the hell are you doing here? Justyce asks the same question as watching her try - and fail - to get down on her knees. He falls on his side and hits his face against the car door. She falls down and reaches for her face - which is as red as sugar apples. Damn it, Mel, are you okay? He pushes his hand away. What do you get for it? Sting. Justyce takes a deep breath. He cares a lot. Obviously. If he hadn't, he wouldn't have walked a mile from Manny's house at 3 a.m. (Manny is of the opinion that Melo is the worst thing that ever happened to Jus, so of course he refused to give his boy a ride). All this so that his drunken disaster does not drive the former. He should leave now, justyce should. But he didn't. Jessa called me, told her. Don't be such a, honey. She only called me because she cares about you. Jessa was planning to take Mel home alone, but Mel threatened to call the cops and say she'd been kidnapped if Jessa hadn't given her a ride to her car. Melo can be a little dramatic when she's drunk. I'm completely unfollowing her, she says (example). In life and on the internet. Interrogated whore. Justyce's shaking his head again. I just came by to make sure you got home safe. That's when it hits Justyce that while he might succeed in getting Melo home, he has no idea how he's going to get back. He closes his eyes when Manny's words flash through his head: This save-a-ho thing is going to get you in trouble, man. He's looking at Mel. Now he's sitting with his head propped up against the car door, half asleep, mouth open. He sighs. Jus, even drunk, can't deny that Melo is the best girl he's ever stared at -- not to mention his hands -- at. She starts leaning, and Justyce grabs her by the shoulders so she doesn't fall. She scares, looking at him wide-eyed, and Jus can see everything about her that initially caught his attention. Melo's dad is a Hall of Fame NFL linebacker (biiiiig black dude), but her mom is from Norway. My Ms. Taylor has milky Norwegian skin, wavy hair the color of honey, and amazing green eyes that are kind of purple around the edge, but she has really full lips, a small waist, crazy curved hips, and probably the prettiest ass Jus has ever seen in his life. That's part of his problem: he's too tripped up by how beautiful she is. He would never dream of such a great girl as if she liked her. Now he has the urge to kiss her, even though she has red eyes and hair and she smells like vodka, cigarettes and weed. But when he's going to push her from her face, she sticks her hand away again. Don't touch me, Justyce. He starts to move his things on the ground - lipstlick, kleenex, tampons, one of those circular things with makeup in one half and a mirror in the other, a flask. Where are my keeeeeeyes? Justyce sees them in front of the back tire and steals them. You don't drive, Mela. Give them. She swipes for the keys but falls into her arms instead. Justyce props her up against the car again and collects the rest of her belongings to put her back in the bag-which is big enough to hold a week's worth of food (what's up with girls and wallet-sized bags?). He unlocks the car, throws the car, throws the car, throws the car, and tries to get Mel off the ground. Then everything goes wrong, really fast. First, he throws up all over the sweatshirt Jus is wearing. Which belongs to Manny. Who specifically said, don't come back here with a throw-up hoodie. Perfect. Jus takes off his hoodie and treads it in the back seat. If he tries to pick mel up again, he'll slap him. Hard. Leave me alone, Justyce, he says. I can't do that, Mel. There's no way you're going to make it home if you try to drive yourself. He's trying to lift her by the armpits, and she spits in his face. He's considering leaving again. He could have called her parents, put the keys in her pocket and jump. Oak Ridge is probably the safest neighborhood in Atlanta. He'll be fine for 25 minutes before Mr. Taylor gets here. But he can't. Despite Manny's claim that Melo has to suffer some consequences for once, leaving her vulnerable here doesn't seem like the right thing to do. So he picks it up and throws it over his shoulder. Melo reacts in his usual gentle way: he screams and beats him on the back with his fists. Justyce tries to get the back door open and is lowering it into the car when she hears WHOOOOOP short sirens and sees blue lights. Within seconds, the police car behind him stops, Justyce settles Melo in the back seat. She's catatonic now. Justyce hears the approaching footsteps, but he's still focused on getting mel saused. He wants the cop to know he's not going to drive so she's not in worse trouble. Before he manages to pull his head out of the car, he feels the pull on his shirt and pulls it back. His head is hit in the doorframe just before his hand attaches to the back of his neck. His upper body hits the trunk with great force, bites the inside of his face, and his mouth is filled with blood. Jus swallows, head spins, can't navigate. The sting of cold metal around his wrist drags him back to reality. Handcuffs. It hits him: Melo is drunk beyond belief in the back seat of a car she fully intended to drive, but Jus is the one in handcuffs. A police officer pushes him to the ground next to a police cruiser when he asks if Justyce understands his rights. He doesn't remember hearing any rights, but his ears were ringing from two blows to the head, so maybe he missed them. He'll swallow more blood. Officer, this is a big wrong, he's going to start saying it, but he's not going to finish it because the officer's going to punch him in the face. Don't call me shit, you son of a bitch. I knew your little man was useless when I saw you walking down the road with that damn hoodie. So the hood was a bad idea. Headphones too. He'd probably notice he's being watched without them. But, Officer, I- Keep your mouth shut. The cop squats down and gets in Justyce's face. I know your kind: pansy like you wander the streets of pretty neighborhoods looking for prey. She couldn't resist the beautiful white girl who locked her keys in the car, could she? Except it doesn't even make sense. If Mel locked the keys in the car, Jus wouldn't have gotten her in it, would he? Justyce finds the officer's label. Castillo, that sounds like a normal white guy. Mom told him how to handle this type of situation, although he must admit that he never expected to actually need advice: Be respectful; keep anger at bay; make sure the police can see your hands (although that's impossible right now). Officer Castillo, I mean, it didn't catch your mind, I told you to shut up! He wishes he could see Mel. Tell the cop the truth. But the guy's blocking his view. If you know what's good for you, you won't move or talk. Resistance only gets you into deeper. Clearly? Cigarette breath and spit stains hit Justyce's face as the cop speaks, but Justyce fixes her gaze on the glowing green F sign of FarmFresh. Look at me when I'm talking to you, boy. He grabs Justyce's chin. I asked you a question. Justyce swallows. He'll meet Officer Castillo's cold blue eyes. He'll clear his throat. Yes, sir, he says. I got it. August 25 DEAR MARTIN (AKA DR. KING), First of all, please know that I mean you have no disrespect to the whole Martin thing. I studied you and your teachings for a project in tenth grade, so it's most natural to communicate with you as a friend. I hope you don't mind. Quick intro: My name is Justyce McAllister. I'm a 17-year-old high school student and scholarship student at Braselton Preparatory Academy in Atlanta, Georgia. I'm in fourth place in my graduating class of 53, I'm captain of the debate team, I've scored 1560 and 34 on my SATs and ACT respectively, despite growing up in the wrong area (not too far from my old stomping grounds). I have a future ahead of me that will probably include an Ivy League education, a possible legal degree and a career in public policy. Unfortunately, during the early hours of the morning, literally none of it mattered. To cut it short, I tried to do a good deed, and I ended up on the ground in handcuffs. And despite my ex-girlfriend being visibly drunk out of her ass, excused my language, obviously I looked like in my prep school hoodie, the cop who handcuffed me called for backup. The craziest part is, if I thought everything was going to be okay once her parents got there, no matter what they told the cops, these guys wouldn't let me go. Mr. Taylor offered to call mom, but the cops made it clear that since I'm 17, I'm considered an adult when he was arrested-aka there was nothing mom could do. When they finally let me go, the sun was rising. It's been hours, Martin. Mrs. F didn't say much when she took me to college, but she made me promise to go to the infirmary and get some cold boxes for swollen wrists. I called my mom to tell her what happened, and she said she'd file a complaint first thing in the morning. But I doubt it's for the good. Honestly, I'm not sure what to feel. I never thought I'd be in that situation. There was this guy, Shemar Carson... A black man, my age, shot and killed in Nevada by that white cop in June. The details are hazy because there were no witnesses, but it's clear that the cop shot an unarmed child. Four times. Even fishier, according to the medical practitioners, there was a two-hour difference between the estimated time of death and when the officer called. I didn't think much about it before last night's incident. There's a lot of questionable information, so it's hard to know what to believe. Shemar's family and friends say he was a good guy, headed to college, active in his youth group...