

Paperwork

by Hannibal Tabu

Clearly, there had been some kind of clerical error.

The list was very thorough, and was audited on a monthly basis to make sure that just this sort of thing never happened. There were literally thousands of criteria that got people of every stripe and strata on the list, which had been maintained since before the very first human fingers scrawled crude images on blank surfaces.

But the last department head had gone through a really emotional breakup, and there was that thing that happened at the solstice party, which all left room for errors to be made. That was clearly what had happened, leading to all of the screaming and rubble and ambulances.

Glenn ran his fingers through his thinning blond hair, looked over the file and tried to figure out how to fix things. Rayvon "Lil' Ray" Carver was a self-hating nihilist of the highest order, a seventeen-year-old junior high dropout filled with enough hate and suffering contained in his neurons and dendrites to blot out entire galaxies. The monitor kept chiming with updates and complaints from other departments, looking at probably hundreds of years of cleaning up this mess.

Rayvon Carver had been on the list since the day he saw his elder brother Alvin gunned down in their front yard, Rayvon's sibling's blood splashed across his favorite white Bugle Boy sweatshirt. That was clearly the event that led him to his teenaged pattern of driving around in a dented Oldsmobile Cutlass with his neighbors K-Dog and Voodoo Child, a sawed-off shotgun on his lap and murder dancing in his eyes.

As Glenn reviewed the photos from what was being called "the

January event," he remembered the very first and most important directive of the department:

"Some people can never, *ever* get their wish."

