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I parked about two blocks from the penitentiary in Baltimore. I was nervous. I stayed in my car for quite a while trying to visualize my meeting with Flint Gregory Hunt. It would be my last meeting with him, my “good bye” meeting. Six years earlier had been my first meeting. I was nervous then too. But that was a different kind of nervous. That was a “hello, I’m the lawyer assigned to represent you” kind of nervous. Six years ago, there were questions that I needed to ask, questions about him and questions about his case. Six years ago he had questions for me as well. Who was I? What experience did I have in capital cases?

Later, we would talk about what had happened in Iron Alley, one of those mean streets in the inner city in East Baltimore. This was the alley Flint Gregory Hunt, then twenty years old, had driven down in a stolen car; the alley down which Officer Adolfo had chased him; the alley with the dead end where Hunt was cornered; the alley where he tried to climb a fence to get away; and the alley where Officer Adolfo grabbed his heel and called him a “fucking nigger.” This was the alley where Hunt turned and fired the fatal shots that killed the seven-year veteran of the Baltimore City police force.

I knew about Iron Alley, of course, before I saw Flint, even that first time. I knew about it from the police report and the court records. But we would not talk about the Alley on the first meeting, our “hello” meeting. This was a man who had already had five lawyers and had been twice sentenced to die. I would need to establish some trust with him before we talked about Iron Alley.

Now, six years later, none of that mattered. Flint would be executed in a few days. I had always called him Flint, though I learned from another lawyer that his friends and

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family all called him Greg, a name he much preferred. Oddly, he never corrected me and, even after I learned that no-one else called him Flint, I continued to call him that and I will always think of him as Flint.

It’s not like it appears in the movies -- the lawyer and the client sitting around with a telephone, waiting for the Governor to call, while the camera periodically pans to a large clock on the wall. The Governor had already denied our Clemency Petition, even though my co-counsel had managed to get letters from two archbishops, the president of the NAACP, the president of an organization of police officers against the death penalty, and a video tape of several jurors who had voted for death and later said they wished they hadn’t. There would be no last minute reprieve here. The Supreme Court had refused to hear our last plea. The case was over.

There was nothing left for me and his other lawyers to do, but say “goodbye.” And so we came, all of us; the ones who still cared anyway, the ones who had represented him in previous proceedings and the ones who represented him now. When I signed in at the prison reception area, I could see in the log book, that I was not the first of the lawyers to say “goodbye.” All our names were there.

It was the usual routine, but different. There were two sets of iron gates to walk through before actually being admitted into the building. They were opened and locked, one at a time. When they closed, they made a loud, hollow, clanging sound. It’s unlike any sound I have ever heard in any other place. The sound reverberates, bounces off the hard surfaces, and echoes around in your head for a few long seconds.

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At the main reception area there was a glass window behind which sat one guard who operated a wooden Lazy Susan contraption with a small opening. I put my driver’s license and bar association card into the slot. They were examined and returned to me. A guard then chaperoned me into another waiting area, once again passing through iron gates. In this room, I was asked to sign the visitor’s log, recording the time, the reason for my visit, and the name of the prisoner I was there to see. I was given a key for a locker to put away my pocketbook, my keys, and other belongings. This time, I put away my briefcase. I wouldn’t be needing it.

I passed through the metal detectors. The metal on my belt sounded the alarm. A guard swept my body with a hand-held wand and declared me “safe.” Another guard had me sign my name on a small white card, which she placed in a plastic bracelet and fastened onto my wrist. It looked like the one a patient wears in the hospital. When I left, I would sign my name again on a paper and someone would compare the two signatures to make certain they matched-- yet another security precaution, totally unnecessary in my case, because I was by then well-known here. That day all the guards knew why I was there. There was a certain solemness and respect shown me that day---none of the usual small talk or banter. They knew about “goodbye” meetings. One of them even said “I’m sorry.” Nothing more, just “I’m sorry.”

A corrections officer told me, apologetically, that I had managed to get there just in time for the “the count.” “The count” is a nose-count of the “residents,” a modern-day euphemism for the prison population, conducted twice a day. It is a low-tech but effective way of making certain that no-one has managed to escape. The officer who

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advised me of the count then told me to make myself comfortable for the next thirty minutes to an hour while the personnel verified that there were the right number of men in the institution.

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“Comfortable” I wasn’t. I was facing the worst failure a lawyer can have. My client was going to be executed. As I waited, I wondered how I had gotten here. I wasn’t one of these people who had always wanted to be a lawyer. My father wasn’t a lawyer. There were no lawyers in my life when I was growing up. My father was a chemist who spent fifteen years as a postal worker in New York because it was the Great Depression and that’s what you did. My mother was a housewife when that’s what mothers did. And me, I wanted to be a cowboy. Not a cowgirl, but a cowboy. I was a committed Tomboy. I looked up to my older brother; wanted what he wanted; wanted to be like him; wanted to *be* him. When I was really little my parents called me “little me too,” because that’s what I said after he answered any question. Maybe every girl with an older brother in those days was a Tomboy. But for me, it was more than that. Boys got to do more; got to be more. As far as I could tell, men had all the cool jobs. They were the doctors, the scientists, the policemen, the ball players, even the chefs.

The only women in my world were teachers, nurses, secretaries, and housewives. And I didn’t want to be any of those things. Besides, the girls I knew seemed silly. Dresses and dolls and playing “house,” that wasn’t for me. I don’t remember it, but my

mother told me my first doll was my only doll since I threw it out my bedroom window when she wasn’t looking.

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I wanted cowboy boots and cowboy hats, baseball bats and baseball mitts. The leather in the palm of my Stan Musual baseball glove started out a yellow ochre color, but became so well-oiled and well worn that it changed to burnt umber. I wore it on my left hand, pounding it with my right fist, even when I was inside the house. I also wore it when I was watching the Washington Senators play on our eleven-inch black and white TV. The Senators were arguably the worst team ever in the history of baseball, but I rooted for them anyway. I guess I’ve always rooted for the underdog: “Indians” against cowboys; workers against bosses; people against corporations; robbers against cops; and, of course, the Washington Senators against anyone they were playing.

I remember going to one baseball game at the old Griffith’s Stadium. I suspect I went to more than one, but the only one I remember was one I went to with my father and Hy Lord. My brother was probably there too and maybe my mother. But it’s really Hy Lord whom I remember. First, there was that name. How could I forget that? His real name was Hyman, of course, but everyone called him Hy. That alone amused me because you could say: “Hi, Hy.” Hy worked with my father in the Patent Office. But it was his part-time job that intrigued me. He was an umpire in some semi-pro baseball league. And he *really* knew baseball. So, I remember sitting next to him at the game at old Griffith Stadium and learning some of the nuances of the game. Griffith Stadium was an in-town ball park in the heart of one of the poorest sections of Washington, D.C.

Funny, even then, we always called it “old” Griffith Stadium as if there was a newer Griffith Stadium somewhere.

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The penitentiary in Baltimore is only a short distance from Camden Yards, a modern-day in-town ball park. But that day, that last day with Flint, baseball and the joy of sitting with my father and Hy Lord seemed a lifetime away.