

Yelling Man.

**“I DIDN’T DO IT! I DIDN’T DO IT! IT WASN’T ME! I DIDN’T DO IT!”**

You were panting as you stood in place. You turned in a circle and burst into another apoplectic spasm. **“I DIDN’T DO IT! IT WASN’T ME!”**

I was walking with my head down, lost in a reverie of an ice-cold Vernors Ginger Ale. My feet were swollen. The heat was oppressive, so saturated that it denied any escape. My clothes stuck to me with each step.

You were a short, wiry man in old black dress pants, a matching dress jacket, a soiled white shirt, and tennis shoes. Each time you shouted, you jumped a little and stiffened your arms and legs as if you’d gotten an electric jolt.

Until I saw you yelling, I didn’t know if you were real. There were stories about you, how you would lure children into your rusty old van, or how you would jump a woman and grab her purse or worse. They could never catch you, it was said. Were the stories about you only stories?

I walked to within several feet of you. I wasn’t afraid; it was the middle of the day and we were in front of the Detroit Public Library and there were people around.

“Yelling Man,” I said to you. You stared at me, your head and chin jutting. You continued to breathe hard through your mouth; your mouth was wet. “What’s your name?” I asked.

The blood vessels in your neck and arms stuck out. Your face shined with sweat. Your eyes bulged. **“NOT ME! IT WASN’T ME! IT WASN’T ME!”**

Written by K.G. Jones.

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I understand why you didn't tell me your name. When someone knows your name, they have a power over you. To possess someone's name, in a way, is to possess them.

"Do you know the stories about you, Yelling Man?"

You remained indignant. **"IT WASN'T ME!"**

Library patrons circumnavigated us like you were a leper. You ignored them. One of them dared to get as near to you as I was. "You really ought to get out of here, y'know? You're scaring people."

A police car drove by, windows up against the heat and humidity, the officers peering at you. They had other priorities to deal with.

I pointed across the street to a parking lot, mostly vacant. In it idled a late model van with a lot of rust.

You erupted in three staccato bursts. **"I! DIDN'T! DO IT!"**

"What are we waiting for?" I said. "Let's go." I was sorry that no one would hear the story.

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Inspired in part by Leslie Silko, "Yellow Woman."

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