

## Me: A Collateral Damage

It was a quiet night. I was wearing my boxer shorts while closing my father's store. In my mind, I was preparing for our test tomorrow. And in that solemn, silent night, my girlfriend bid my heart goodnight. Little did I know, it was going to be the last night of my life.

This is the story of how I died. Some macabre chains of events that I probably didn't deserve, but got anyway.

Hello, my name is Kian Delos Santos. I was only 17 that night.

I am a grade 11 student. I have a loving mother, who is an Overseas Filipino Worker in Middle East, and I also have my caring father. I have a humble family that loves me, and I have a beautiful girlfriend to whom I would have loved to share my future with.

I've always wanted to be a policeman someday, so I took my studies seriously. But reality decided to have an irony of its own.

It was 8:30 in the evening when I decided to help close my father's store. It all happened so fast, but there were three policemen that suddenly dragged me. My heart was pounding through my chest, and I knew there was danger ahead, but I didn't know exactly what they were trying to do.

I kept screaming, shouting, pleading to them. But they only had to cover my face with a jacket to shut me up. Then, they carried me towards a dark alleyway as I were a pig for slaughter. I couldn't breathe properly, and I was already crying in fear. My whole body was shaking, and I couldn't do anything.

I kept begging, "*Tama na po! Tama na po! May test pa kami bukas! (Stop! Please Stop! We still have a test tomorrow!)*" hoping vainly that they'll notice how hardworking of a student I am. That maybe they were making a mistake. But it did nothing.

They finally decided to uncover my face and let go of me. I was shrieking at that point, and I couldn't stop thinking about my family. Did they know what was happening? Were they aware? *I* didn't even know what was happening.

One of the officers gave me a gun. What would I even do with a gun? All I wanted was to go home. "*Ano po gagawin ko sa baril? (What will I do with the gun?)*" I asked. I could no longer think straight.

"*Paputukin mo tapos tumakbo ka (Shoot it then run),*" one of them answered. And I couldn't bring myself to do it. I knew that I am innocent. But maybe, just maybe, they would let me go if I do it.

So, I ran. Ran faster than I ever did for my life. I tried to shoot it too, but I was scared out of my mind when a bullet came out. The hot tears kept streaming down my face.

And that's when I heard another gunshot. And before I knew it, I was already on the filthy ground, bleeding to death. I thought of my family, my life, and how all of this was just a bad dream.

That's when it all shattered, and everything went black.

It was ironic how the night were tranquil and unbothered. It was eerily quiet, for the cries of the fallen are silenced by the ones who are supposed to protect us. At the age of 17, I held a gun. I was scared to death, pleading for my life. I screamed, but I was voiceless. Then, I was brutally killed.

At the age of 17, I was a victim of injustice, a collateral damage.