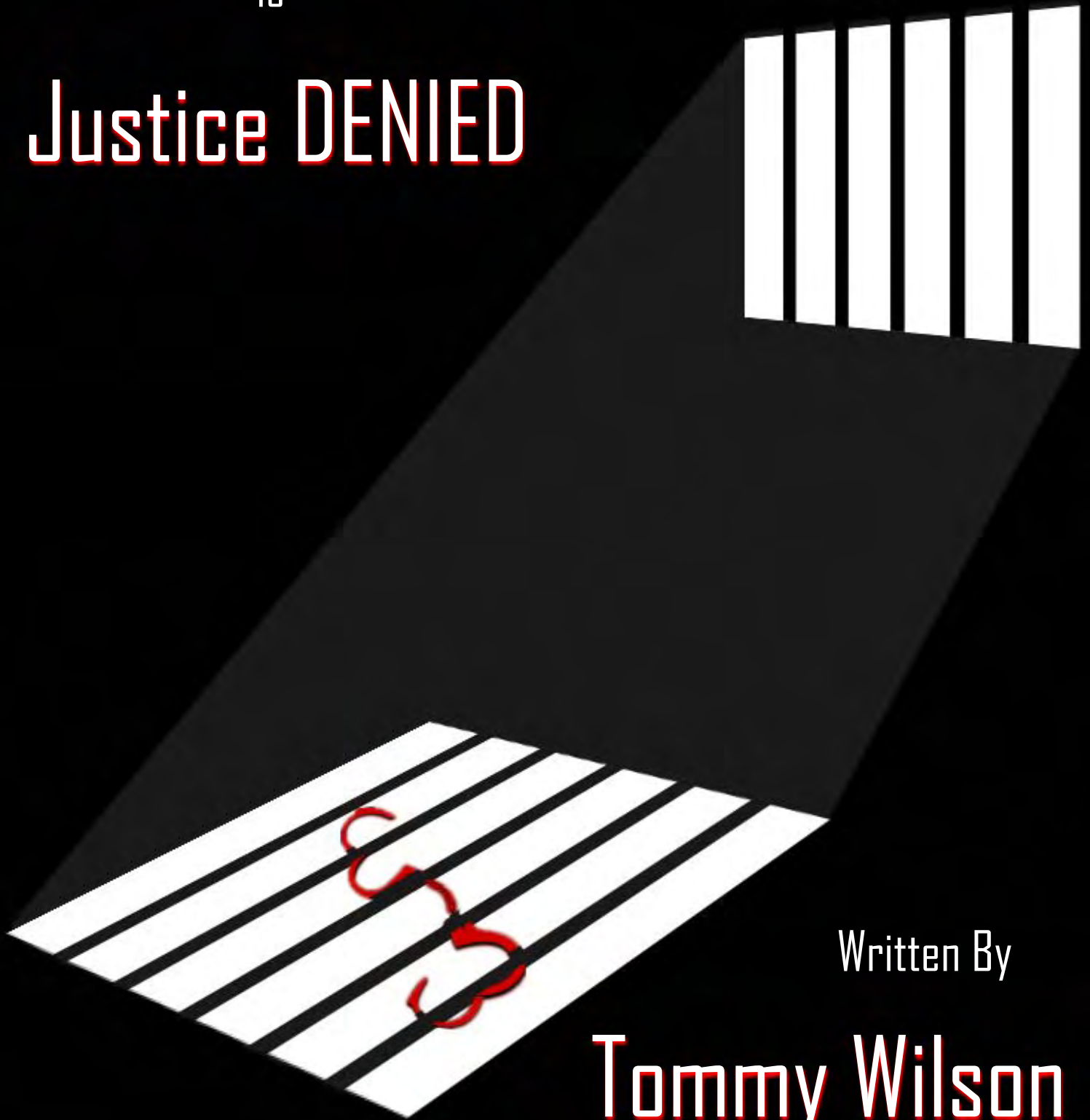


# Justice Delayed

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# Justice DENIED



Written By

# Tommy Wilson

This is a true story. The names and places have been changed to protect the innocent.

# CHAPTER 1 – January 1960

*“Holy shit, what have I gotten myself into?”* These were only a few of the thoughts flying through Tommy’s mind. Having just turned eighteen, Tommy found himself in a single cell in the local jail for something he knew nothing about:

I had started the day when I picked up a guy I knew. We had gone to see some girl the guy knew and after a short time, the guy asked me if he could use my car to go to the store for some sodas. I told him that he could go ahead and use it, but he shouldn’t be long.

After the guy left, I sat on the porch with the girl we had come to see. I really didn’t know the girl, but I tried to carry on a conversation anyway. We talked about everything. After an hour or so, I began to wonder just where that guy and my car were. When I mentioned it to the girl, she simply said that she was sure he would be back shortly. Damn, a new car and someone had already made off with it! He’d probably wreck it before he got back.

It was around ten o’clock that night when the girl’s father came out and said it was time for her to come in and get ready for bed. He was aware that the guy had taken my car and not returned, so he offered to let me spend the night in their spare bedroom. I guess it was about two o’clock in the morning when I was awoken by my father and father-in-law. They told me to get up and get dressed because they were taking me home.

My father told me that the fellow that had my car had gotten himself thrown into jail. I asked my father where my car was. He told me that it was at the local sheriff’s office. When the police picked up the guy, they had called my father-in-law since his name appeared on the car title. It seemed that the guy had gotten himself locked up for drunk driving and when the police looked at his records, they found out that he was also AWOL from the Army. Both my father

and father-in-law went to the jail thinking it was me. Upon arriving, the guy told them where he had left me.

Dad took me home and I went back to bed. The next morning, the deputy sheriff that Dad knew on a first-name basis came to the house and told us that he had to take me to the sheriff's office until some things were straightened out. It seems that when they had arrested the guy, they had searched my car and found some tires that had been stolen the night before. The deputy told Dad that he just wanted to talk to me about it and that Dad should be able to pick me up later that morning.

I suppose it was my first experience with the good cop/bad cop act. When the deputy sheriff first talked to me, it seemed all he wanted to do was help me get things straightened out so that I could go back home. He did explain that the sheriff wanted to have me charged with the crime and have me sent to prison. However, the deputy didn't feel that I knew anything about it and would try to help me out if I would cooperate. That day, all he talked about was the tires. When I told him that I knew nothing about them, he said that he would have to hold me until the next day when it could all be straightened out.

The cell I was being housed in was separated from the rest of the jail and I couldn't see or talk to any of the other prisoners there. I could not sleep that night. All I thought about was the hassle the guy, who had my car, got me into and the thought of kicking his ass as soon as I got out and found him. When Mom and Dad didn't show up the next morning, I didn't think that much about it. I just figured that the deputy must not have called them.

It was around nine or ten o'clock later that evening when the deputy came to my cell again. This time, he didn't mention the tires, but started off by saying that I had really gotten myself in a jam. The sheriff had other charges of breaking and entering that had occurred in the county that he wanted to charge me with. I explained to him that I did not know about any breaking and entering and that if he didn't believe me that he could talk to my wife who would verify that.

The next day when I didn't see anyone, I really began to get worried and wondered why I hadn't heard from or seen any of my family.

The fourth day, the deputy came to my cell and told me not to say anything, to just listen until he was through. He told me about another breaking and entering that had happened somewhere in the county, and if I would just say that I had done it, I would be able to go home. As much as I wanted to go home, I wasn't willing to say that I had done anything. I told him again that I did not know about any breaking and entering. This seemed to get him pissed off and he started telling me what the sheriff was going to do to me if I didn't. I told him that I really didn't care what the sheriff wanted. I was not going to say I had done anything when I hadn't! We talked for a few minutes more and then he left. Before leaving, I had asked him if any of my family had come by to see me or if he could call them for me. He told me that they had not and that no phone calls were allowed.

This went on for over a week, the deputy coming to my cell at night, telling me of other charges the sheriff wanted to blame on me. I wasn't that concerned about his threats because I knew I hadn't done any of the things of which he spoke. I was becoming more and more alarmed over not seeing my wife or any of my family. During this entire time, I was not allowed to call anyone or even write a letter. I didn't know the expression then, but later I learned I was being held *incommunicado*.

I had been in jail for eleven days, had not seen my family, and did not receive any word from them. When the deputy came to my cell that night, he told me the sheriff was going to take me to court the next morning and try to get the judge to give me twenty years. *Twenty years, what the hell for?* The deputy told me that it didn't make any difference whether I had committed the crimes or not; the sheriff was adamant about taking me to court the next day and getting me at least twenty years in prison.

The only thing I thought was that I wanted to talk to an attorney before I went to court. I relayed this to the deputy, at which point he asked me if I had any money to pay for an attorney. I told him no, but my parent would pay him for me. He asked me if I had seen any of my family

since being locked up. Of course, I hadn't! I had not seen my family for more than a week in the jail. He then told me that my family, including my wife, had disowned me, that I was the black sheep of the family and that no one wanted anything further to do with me. So if I wanted an attorney, I had better have the money to pay him myself.

I think at that time, if he had told me to plead guilty to first degree murder, I would have done so. There are no words to describe just how I felt. I had been there for eleven days without seeing any of my loved ones, figured something had to be wrong for them not to have shown up at least once to talk to me, and then have the deputy tell me this. To say I was devastated would be putting it mildly.

The deputy kept telling me that if I would just do as he told me, everything would be okay and I would probably go home the next day immediately after going to court. He said that when I went before the judge, I should plead guilty and say nothing else.

I was the first defendant in court the following morning. Sure enough, there sat the sheriff. The bastard seemed to control the county so completely that he acted like a district attorney rather than a sheriff and sat at the district attorney's desk like he was prosecuting my case himself. I could tell from the look he gave me that he was out to get me. By now, I figured the only hope I had was to do what the deputy had told me. After the first charge was read and the judge asked how I would plead, I answered the way the deputy had told me and said guilty. The judge proceeded to read another charge and asked me how I would plead. I didn't know how to answer, since the deputy hadn't said anything about other charges, so I just sat there. At this point, the deputy tapped me on the leg and mouthed the words: *Say Guilty*. Again I said guilty. That was the only word I said during my entire trial. The judge started reading off sentences and, to this day, I don't know what he said.

When we were returning to the jail, I asked the deputy if I would be able to go home now that I had complied and done what he had asked me to do. He answered with a smirk that I wouldn't be going home because the judge had sentenced me to prison. I reminded him what he had told me the night before. All he would say was that he didn't control the courtroom—the

judge did—and I was sentenced to prison. *To Prison?!? What the hell for?* I hadn't done anything except to do what he told me to do!

That same afternoon, my wife and mother were finally allowed to visit me, and it was then that I learned that my family had tried to see me every day I was in jail but they were told I could not have visitors. Talk about justice!

One of the first things Mom wanted to know was which attorney I wanted her to get for me. Knowing nothing about the law or what could be done, I told her that it was too late to get an attorney. I had already gone to court and pled guilty. No one in my family had any experience with the law, so Mom didn't know what to do either. Both my Mom and my wife told me that they would come to visit me every day while I was in prison. What was so bad was that I couldn't tell them how much time the judge had given me.