The Street with the Coffee Shop

The barista secured his apron and began cleaning the tables of the coffee shop so he could close up. Only two people remained in the shop. One was the young barista, working to pay his way through college, and the other a middle aged journalist who often stopped by the coffee shop to write her articles. She sat at a table slowly drinking her latte and fixedly typing. The barista recognized the journalist as one of the shop’s usual customers. He did not, however, wish to be in her company for any extended period of time.

This journalist, he recalled, rarely smiled at people or did anything remotely nice. Not only that, but she never gave tips. He shook his head in annoyance. She comes here at least twice a week to write, he thought, you would think she’d leave a tip every once in a while….The barista bitterly recalled some of the journalist’s past articles. Like her demeanor, they were frightening.

Her most recent article exposed a scandal the city mayor was involved in. The scandal was nothing major, but the way she twisted her words made it seem like a conspiracy equivalent to the Watergate scandal. The mayor resigned the next day and moved within a week of the article’s publication. She’d written articles so terrible that they caused local businesses to shut down and city organizations to disband. The worst part, thought the barista, is that the corruption she writes about is rarely terrible enough to cause these things. Innocent people and their hard work are being targeted by this woman and their lives are being destroyed unfairly. Actually, now that I think about it…she’s more of a monster than a woman.

The journalist finished off her latte and began packing up her laptop. She’s disgusting, the barista told himself. He finished wiping the last table. I wonder if she has a
family... He glanced at her left hand. No, there’s no ring. That’s definitely for the best. Nobody deserves to be stuck with this heartless woman for life, and she certainly shouldn’t reproduce! What a messed up bunch of kids she would raise. They would probably bully their way through life, just like their mother. He smirked at his musings as she stood up to leave. The barista watched the journalist with hatred. To his surprise, she looked over at him.

“Hey, have a good night kid,” she said and walked over to the tip jar. There, she placed a ten dollar bill. “I got a raise today...just thought this was a little overdue.” Then she smiled at the barista and left. He felt stupid. Man, what the heck was I thinking? This lady is a journalist. There’s no way they get paid much... I bet those articles aren’t all her ideas too. There’s probably some editor that makes her write stuff like that. Either way...she’s not such a monster.

The air outside the coffee shop was crisp and dark. The journalist walked hurriedly towards her apartment building. She was excited about her new article and exhausted from a long day of work. It was a very tenuous mood. As she was walking, a man came out of a building in front of her. The journalist realized it was a bar. The man slowly maneuvered himself down a couple stairs and leaned against the tavern. He was wasted. So wasted, in fact, he had spent all of his money to become so and now had none left for a cab ride home.

“Shit,” he muttered, searching his wallet. The journalist narrowed her eyes and decided to cross the street and avoid this guy. Not only could he be dangerous, she thought, but he’s obviously an idiot who hasn’t gotten his life together yet. The journalist took pride in the fact that she never swore and she was certainly never this drunk. Whatever this man’s life is like, there’s no way it’s good. I doubt he even went to college. Yeah, she concurred with her previous decision, I’m not going to associate with this guy. Her scorn for the man, however, didn’t stop him from seeing her.

“Hey! Hey lady!” the man shouted from across the street. “Do you...have any money?” he managed to get out in a slurred inquiry. He waved his arms at the journalist, as if his shouting wasn’t enough. She didn’t look at him and quickly walked on. Why should I help this idiot? she asked herself. Oh wait...I shouldn’t. Her ignoring him was rewarded with
a loud “Whatever...bitch!” from the man. He then turned away and started walking in the other direction. Of course he would call me that, the journalist sadly noted, it’s probably the only insult he knows. Just one more reason he doesn’t deserve my help. On that note, the journalist continued home.

The man too, continued home. He only lived six blocks away; however at the pace he was going, he might not make it home until morning. In his muddled brain he mustered up partial thoughts. Too cold. Brrr. Stupid cabs….Stupid lady. I even called her the ‘B’ word. She deserved it…Why is the dark so…dark? He laughed at himself. Soon though, the man was overcome with sadness. For he remembered the reason he was out here right now, the reason he had gone to that bar in the first place. Even though he had spent all night drinking, his mind wandered back to what he kept trying to forget.

The man was a doctor. His whole life was dedicated to medicine and healing. Celebrated by many, he had established quite a wonderful life for himself and his family. The doctor, however, had recently been feeling the toll of his profession. It was not often he lost a patient, and if he did, it was never anybody’s fault. He knew that. But when he did lose a patient, after doing everything possible to save that patient, it was rough. There was always grief to be dealt with and families to be told and most of the time the doctor got through it. His wife was very helpful and he had great colleagues that helped each other through these losses. That was most of the time.

Last week was not most of the time. This patient was a woman, five months pregnant. He couldn’t save her. He was the last one to try. She and the baby were lost.