Salvation

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Mary had never been opposed to working downtown despite the drive, the parking, and the noise. She got used to it. As a lawyer, she knew that her profession may require her to work under such conditions. Mary grew up in a small town, but she was no small-town girl. Her ambitions were too great. She was a prosecutor, which meant it was her job to make sure that the charged party was convicted of his or her crime. She was exceptionally good at her job, and she always worked alone. She found all her witnesses, gathered all her evidence, and took all the glory or the shame when it was done."

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RITA NAUMAN

SALVATION

Mary had never been opposed to working downtown despite the drive, the parking, and the noise. She got used to it. As a lawyer, she knew that her profession may require her to work under such conditions. Mary grew up in a small town, but she was no small-town girl. Her ambitions were too great. She was a prosecutor, which meant it was her job to make sure that the charged party was convicted of his or her crime. She was exceptionally good at her job, and she always worked alone. She found all her witnesses, gathered all her evidence, and took all the glory or the shame when it was done.

Until the time it happened, everything else remained the same. Mary parked in a public garage and left the ticket on the dashboard. She exited her car with her briefcase in hand and locked the doors with her remote. Then, she tried the driver side door, twice. It was locked. It always was. She checked her lipstick one last time in the reflection of the car window, and began her walk to the office: 3 blocks north on Exchange Blvd., 2 blocks west on Main St. In her four years at the firm, the routine never changed. Mary hadn’t realized the consistency of her mornings until the day it did change.

She heard them from a block away. A group of raucous protesters had gathered on the corner of Exchange and Main. She heard shouts of "Turn to Jesus!" and "The end is near!" Mary had never witnessed such a disturbing display of Christianity gone wild. About two dozen protesters were gathered on the corner. Some were holding signs, and some were wearing signs, but all of them were shouting at the people walking by. Mary slowed her pace. She didn’t know what to make of the scene, but she knew she couldn’t avoid it. She had to turn that corner.

One of the men saw Mary approaching and directed his racket at her. "Live not by evil, but by the way of the Lord! The mighty wrath of God is upon us! Turn to Jesus, and save yourself! It’s not too late! Let God cleanse your wicked soul!"

Mary put her hand in front of her face and kept walking past the man—past all of them. She had just begun to turn the corner onto Main St. when she heard him holler, "See that woman who walks the path of evil! She worships the devil! Let her be dammed to hell for all eternity!"

Mary planted both her feet on the pavement. "This is ridiculous," she thought to herself, "and all I need is a name to put an end to it." She marched back to the man who was shouting at her and said plainly, "Tell me your name."

The man looked at her and looked as if he were considering it. He put a rough hand through his silver hair and cleared his throat. "No."

"Tell me your name," Mary repeated, "so I can tell Jesus who sent me."

The crowd became silent. They lowered their signs and focused on the man. His hands were shaking. "Peter Morris," he said.

"Peter Morris," Mary echoed with a wide smile. "Jesus will be pleased."