

Double-Minded Man

by

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DRAFT #6

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1. TWIRL - DAY

68-year-old Harriet Smith sits with two wrinkled hands firmly on the wheel of her rust-eaten Subaru wagon, staring straight ahead through the top level of bifocals as she waits serenely at a red light.

Harriet is alone in the car. To her right is another vehicle, also waiting, in this case to make a right turn; it's a sleek, low-slung, black Camaro.

We are inside the cabin with Harriet. The Subaru's sound system softly plays choral music. Harriet's lips move slightly as she internally sings along, mouthing a slow aria. Her head weaves slightly side to side, in rhythm with the music.

Things are calm as can be here inside the car with Harriet. There are a pair of well-worn Bibles on the empty passenger seat beside her, one with a gold-lettered 'Harriet' on its leather front cover, the other with a matching 'Joseph' on its front cover.

Harriet's eyes swivel up to the light: still red. We wait with her.

Suddenly there is a piercing SCREECH outside. Harriet jerks her head to the right and we follow her line of sight.

A sleek motorcycle has swerved out of its lane and is now streaking straight for the right side of the Camaro beside Harriet's car.

The bike slams with CLANG into the side of the Camaro. Its rider is flung up and forward into the air, twirling passed Harriet's windshield.

We now watch from Harriet's POV, in slow motion. The black-leather-clad motorcyclist sails by Harriet's windshield, airborne. We see a man's face, clearly: His elephant-hide skin tells us that he is well beyond middle-age. Yet thick, black curls of youthful hair emerge from under his helmet. The rider has only one half of a black, bushy, swept-out, waxed mustache. His eyes are weary and grey, and appear to lock with Harriet's for an instant.

We return to normal speed. The body is now lying on the incoming lane to the left of Harriet's Subaru, perfectly still on the blacktop, the head twisted into an impossible angle. Blood seeps from a nostril. The man's black leather jacket and matching pants are somehow pristine. Beside the lifeless head, a BMW medallion lies on the pavement, glinting in the sunlight.

2. YES, THAT'S HIM - LATER

We are at the morgue. A pallid, bald, male corpse is laid out on a steel table, supine in front of and below a standing Harriet. Beside her is the medical examiner, a bearded, bespectacled, rapier-thin man in a white lab coat. The ME, markedly taller than Harriet, stoops down to meet her eye level, and stares at Harriet with owl-like eyes made even larger by the thick lenses of his glasses.

Harriet, eyes fixed on the body, says: "Yes, he is my Joseph."

ME: "Are you positive?"

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There is no reply from Harriet, who stands motionless, still staring down at Joseph's bloodless face.

The ME, still looking at her, again: "Mrs. Smith? Are you sure this is your husband?"

No reply from Harriet, who stands motionless, still staring down at Joseph's pallid face.

The examiner pushes his glasses further down his nose, peers over them, leans in closer to Harriet, and again says: "Are you sure this is your husband? You see, his personal effects, well, uh, ... they seem a bit ... incongruous."

Harriet finally turns to look at the ME. She asks: "Such as?"

Now it's the ME's turn to delay. He frowns, stands up straight, opens his mouth to speak, but closes it, and says nothing.

Harriet again: "Such as?"

ME: "I'm not sure I would know where to start. Cocaine. A thoroughly illegal, experimental variant of Viagra. Tickets to some kind of private fight or contest. Brass knuckles. A large switchblade. A holster for a large handgun — but no gun found. Telephone numbers for some ... disreputable members of ... your sex. A fold-out—"

Harriet manages a slight wave to request an end to the enumeration. She wobbles, and grips the edge of the table for stability.

3. SECOND HOME - LATER

Harriet pulls up at a rural, shabby, self-service storage facility, and parks her Subaru. She pulls out of her trunk what is — given her slight build and short height — a strikingly big and heavy-duty bolt cutter.

Sunset is approaching. No one else is around.

Harriet starts looking at the numbers above each unit, apparently searching for one in particular. The front doors of many of the units are dented and rusted. She gets the hang of the sequencing, walks to the right one: #13. It's padlocked.

She begins a comically inept battle to cut the padlock's lock.

The loop is finally severed with a SNAP; Harriet nearly tumbles to the ground. She lets the cutter fall to the pavement, retracts the padlock from the slide catch, drops it down on the blacktop, grabs a rope handle, and rolls up the overhead door.

The unit is a thing of stunning cleanliness and creature comfort.

In the corner is a large, maroon, leather armchair. An antique, golden, full-length lamp stands beside the chair. A black, leather, pull-out couch accompanies the chair. On the couch Harriet notices a number of items: a black .44 caliber magnum; some gold and silver chains; a number of pornographic magazines;

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and a slightly crumpled note. Harriet gives the gun a second glance and attempts to avert her eyes; she picks up the note. It's dated the day prior to Joseph's death, and reads:

"Dear Harriet: Terribly sorry but I won't be able to make the church planning meeting tonight for the new mission series. Need a late night at the office. Please tell Pastor Locke I will follow-up. Don't wait up either, as I'll be home quite late. Love, Joseph"

Harriet passively lets her hand release the note, which float to the floor. She brings her arm to her side, takes in the rest of the room, and slowly walks over to the corner opposite the chair — toward a jet-black end-table. Upon reaching this table, Harriet stretches a trembling arm out to open the top drawer. As soon as she opens the drawer, the contents are revealed: two long injection needles, and a tied-off bag of white powder – Harriet lets out a short, anemic shriek and collapses to the concrete floor, unconscious.