

Wednesday Morning 4 AM

I walked to the job the few extra blocks. The added distance got me a better parking rate. The job was of my own doing. I was a partner. It was at times exhilarating. My clients loved the way I handled things. They paid and didn't complain. The work could also be overwhelming at times, but the money was a huge offset to the demands of the job. The rigors of work and home required balance to my life for the sake of my wife and kids. It just required some "give." I did the "give" by going early to work. Mentally, I figured the family never suffered if they slept while I went and earned the money for our life style... a good life style. We could do most anything. Certainly there were times we denied ourselves almost nothing.

Work was particularly demanding just then. I was up extra early. The hours when people figured no fool would be at work were just the time when this fool fooled them. Yep! Four AM. Only the clients in Europe might stupidly think to bother me. Even then, those clients voiced surprise if they called and asked what time it was "over there." That was relatively rare. The wonder of no phones, quiet in which to work, and the absolute ownership to all the resources in the office; what beauty that was. No competition. Nobody else. Just me and work.

The walk was colder that morning. I pulled my brief case a little closer and buried my hands in my pockets for additional warmth. It was dark, the kind of dark in a downtown city where you keep yourself aware of everything around you. I had a friend that landed in the hospital for 4 months after almost being beaten to death. That didn't stop me. I exercised better caution. It wouldn't happen to me.

I rounded the corner. Just a block to go to my office building. The street lights flashed their caution/stop, on-off warning to me. No traffic moved on the street to pay attention to the lights. The flashing lights drew me away from my walk. Without paying attention I almost tripped over a bundle of rags hanging out from the small inlet to a store front. Two eyes popped up. A face that defied age and description. She drew the rags closer around for warmth... and stared. I stepped back and opened my mouth, but went silent. The stupid pill I had taken that morning had reached the peak of its efficiency just then. I took a further step back and we stared at each other. It was probably 2 seconds... no more than 10. It seemed really long. Neither of us moved or talked.

I shuffled off. Hurrying, but more wary of what was around me. I thrust the electronic card key in the lock and slid into the warmth of the building. I hesitated. What had I just done? How could I be standing in a warm building with this woman sitting out in the cold. I sobered my thinking. There was work to do. She had survived the night. She knows the streets. She doesn't need me, especially at 4:00 AM when there was work to do and money to make. She would take the golden portion of my morning away. The elevator doors closed.

I see her face from time to time... not on the street. I don't really know what happened to her. She comes to me when I don't want to see her eyes. When I am troubled, her eyes pop above the rags and look at me. She watches me. She waits for me.