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English

Mrs. Parker

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## 45th Street

“45th street,” Low and raspy, a young female voice calls out.

“45th street what?” The uber questions with a thick french accent. His tone is friendly and his eyes sparkle as he glances in his mirror to reveal a girl. *She must not be over seventeen*, the man thought to himself. Although this was normal, the experienced man still wondered what a young lady could be doing out so late.

“45th street,” The mysterious girl called out again. Her voice was slurred and her face was covered by a beat up baseball cap that read Philadelphia Phillies.

“Ma’m, with that information I don’t believe I can take you anywhere,” The uber tried, “What neighborhood, what address?”

“This neighborhood.” The girl stated. “Just punch in 45th street. It’s the first location here.” So, with this bit of information, The driver drove off.

He glanced back at the girl. She glanced at him and took a drink from a bottle. He feared what was in the bottle. He wished to warn her of the dangers. Sadly, customer policies strictly prohibited conversations that could lead to dissatisfaction of a customer. Instead, the man tried a different approach.

“Ma’m, I can’t help but admire your hat. Are you a Philadelphia fan?” He asked. He himself was a Philadelphia fan, and it wasn’t often he found another like himself, seeing as he lived in Toronto where the Blue Jays played. The girl responded by swearing harshly.

“I’m taking that as a no?” The man pushed. “I don’t mean to offend you.”

After taking another drink, the girl loudly stated, “I am not a Philadelphia supporter, I’m not an anyone supporter. Just me, myself, and I. This hat,” She tapped her head with her bottle, “This hat here is only for my, for my...” And with that she burst into tears.

“Miss, I’m awfully sorry!” The driver exclaimed. “I didn’t mean to upset you!”

“I know,” The girl said. “It’s just hard you know, your mom leaves when she’s the only thing you’ve got…” Her words ran together so much that the man could only pick out words here and there. “an you ain’t sure what to do no more” she rambled on incoherently, “so I turned to drinking” The girl continued, with words he couldn’t quite catch. Everything slurred together until she stopped for a pause to take another drink. “And you start thinking about everything you hate: yourself, your family… and if there’s one out there, God.” She stated bitterly. The man stopped at the red light. He heard the last sentence clear as day.

“God?” He asked remorsefully.

“Specially Him. He took everything away… Well here’s my stop an here’s your money.” She gave the man a fistful of bills and coins. The man had not realized he had indeed arrived at 45th street. He watched as the girl hobbled out and walked down the sidewalk by the red light. She walked into the front yard of a house around to the back. *That’s odd*, the man thought to himself. Perhaps her folks left the back door open for her. It was a nice house, with an overgrown yard, nonetheless nice.

“She hates God,” The man with much experience said aloud. “And to think, I’m headed home from church right now!”

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The man went along with his week, praying for the girl occasionally, but he figured he would never see her again. He left his church at 11:00 p.m. after a long night of cleaning up. He wasn’t poor, but he needed more than what he had. So, he tried to uber when possible. He got another request tonight. When he checked the notification on his phone, it was the same location off the town square and the same girl.

“The girl that hates God.” He said quietly. “Well, God, let’s change that.” The man prayed. He knew what God could do to save somebody. He himself knew. He’d felt the change. He had a Savior and a Friend. Not for long, only 20 years, but enough to know how to help someone.

He arrived around 11:30 to give the girl a ride. He prepared to talk to the girl, try to find out about her. He wanted to reach her in some way, but he knew a speech and sermon wouldn’t

do it. He had been her age before, he knew that was not the right way. He would simply test the waters today, see how open she was to just talking.

She opened the door to the car and practically fell inside. The bottle in her hand didn't move though. Not one drop was spilled.

“Good evening, miss” The old man told her. “I believe I had you last week. Where can I take you?”

“45th street.” Was her groggy reply.

“Yes, miss. Is there anything I can do for you? I can change the temperature back there or if you need some water I can...” The man looked back to see the girl. She was hard asleep, cradling the bottle in her lap. Tonight would not be a night for conversation. Not with this young lady at least. Instead, the man turned to his Father in Heaven asking, “Father, help her to be alright.” He kept driving, and decided he would pull up to the house he remembered her walking into. He pulled up to the house and parked by the curb. He turned to the back and called out,

“Miss, we've arrived at your house.” He didn't know why she said 45th street instead of the house address, but the least he could do was save her some walking distance.

“My house.. Don't you mean 45th...” The girl sat up abruptly, hitting her head on the roof. Her bottle still did not move though. Harsh swearing began. “Look here mister I dunno what you're thinking dropping me off at this house when I said 45th street but I oughtta...” Her harsh swearing returned. She shoved the man some money and stumbled out of the car. “The lights are on! What am I gonna do?” she said miserably. “You woke him up, you did,” she spat at the man. “Drive on out of here and quickly why don't you”

And so the man drove away.

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Sunday came round again and the man was certain the girl wouldn't request again. The man prayed up a storm, and to his surprise, the request came. He picked the girl up at the same time off the square and as she said,

“45th street. No closer and no further please.”

The man began his rehearsed apology,

“Yes, miss. I'd like to apologi-”

“No fuss. You didn’t know. In fact I’m still trying to figure out...” The young lady’s voice trailed off. For the first time it didn’t slur though. Her words weren’t running together, they were carefully articulated. “I don’t see why you’d put in the extra effort, that’s all. I didn’t pay you to go to the house, just the street. It was stupid of you, but for some reason I’m not mad at you.” She said. “Just never do it again.” She huffed the last sentence and looked out the window, embarrassed.

“Yes, miss, I should have done what ya told me to, I just saw you out cold as a rock I thought I’d save you a few extra steps. It wasn’t right of me though, I just saw you walk in that house the time before” He said all of this as they drove.

“Like I said, no fuss, and I mean it. Don’t mention it again. Ever really.”

“Yes’m” The man said. He pondered what to say next. He felt a door open, but he didn’t want to walk through it too fast and have it slam shut in his face. He thought of how to tread carefully, but to his surprise again she mumbled,

“Dad doesn’t like me getting home too late. He don’t know or care when I leave. But he minds when I come home drunk like I do, so I try not to let him see me get home.” She hesitated. “Come morning time his own hangovers too bad to have remembered I left in the first place.”

“I see,” The man replied. The young lady shook her head.

“Don’t know why I’m telling you this. Guess it’s just nice having somebody who don’t say much.”

“I’ve been around the block a few times,” He said carefully. “I realize it’s good for a person to have somebody who listens to ya.” He then added. “It took me a while to find Someone like that. When He started listening, I couldn’t help myself.” As he spoke, he pulled up to 45th street. The girl paid him and before she got out she said,

“Where’d ya find Him?”

The man took a deep breath, taking the second to pray to the Man Himself. “In the Bible.”

The girl looked confused, opened her mouth, and shut it again. She finally settled on,

“Alright then. Thank you, sir.”

“You can call me Mr. Miller.”

“Thank you, Mr. Miller.”

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“I thought about whatcha said a few weeks ago, Mr. Miller,” the girl slurred as she tumbled in the car a few Sundays later. “Watcha said about the Bible.”

Weeks had passed and each Sunday Mr. Miller took the girl home. She objected to any more serious talk and was no longer sober. Every week she’d get in, ramble about 45th street, and either pass out or talk slurred sentences. It was a miracle she even found where he parked, outside the square, slightly away from all of the buildings by her neighborhood. He didn’t know where she went each Sunday - a bar, restaurant, club - he had no idea. She was always by herself. And she was always intoxicated. Since the last Sunday, Mr. Miller had reached out to his prayer group from his church to ask them to pray for the girl. They gathered together and all prayed for her. So, when Mr. Miller heard the girl speak, he thanked his Heavenly Father.

“Have you now?” He asked her. “What did you think?”

“I think I’d rather keep on talking to my bottle than a Man in a Book.” She spoke loudly and clearly. She raised her bottle in her hand and spilled it on Mr. Miller’s seats.

“Why’s that?” He asked gently, not noticing her spills.

“The way I see it-” she stumbled over her words. “Why’d I listen to Someone who jus goes and sits on His pockets while I drink and drink? Must not be too bad if He don’t stop me.” The man began tentatively, “Have you ever thought that maybe He-” The girl cut him off,

“Yeah I thought about Him. I thought about how He done nothing. All he does is sit on those pockets. He didn’t stop my sister from dyin’, or my mom from leavin’, or my dad from...” She swallowed a chug of alcohol. “He don’t do nothing so I won’t do nothin.”

“He does a lot of things, sweetheart. He created the world. He created you.” The man said.

“And He created horrible people like my father.” The girl snapped. The man found it hard to believe how the girl could argue so deliberately while she was so drunk. What baffled him more was how she could reject Him even while acknowledging His existence. She knew she and her father were created by Him. “Why does He let all of these bad things happen? Why’d he create me? “What for?”

“Because He loves you and wants to have a relationship with you.”

“He doesn't love me.”

“He does, sweetheart. He loved us enough to send His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. We are covered by the blood of Jesus and saved by His death and resurrection. He rose again for you and for me.” the man continued, sharing the Gospel in detail. When he finished though, he looked back to find the girl hard asleep. He knew not what she heard.

He decided it was time to leave her his package he'd prepared. He pulled out a Bible and a short pamphlet from his church that explained the Gospel. He slid it in her bag that was crossed over her shoulder. He then gently woke her up and told her they'd arrived. She wobbled out the car door and he rolled down his window.

“Miss. maybe you don't talk to Him because you don't believe He can save you. He can and He's waiting for you to believe in Him.”

The girl paused, but did not turn around. After a moment, she snuck round her back yard and into the house, like she did every Sunday.

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The next Sunday came around. This time the girl did not request for an uber. The man told his church about the last ride, and they gathered together and prayed for her. They knew that they had done what they could do and that they must wait for the girl to respond to God. They prayed that He would reveal Himself to her and that she would no longer hate Him. It amazed Mr. Miller knew so much about this young lady's life- her circumstances, her losses, her hatreds, and yet he did not even know her name. All he knew was that she was hurting desperately.

Another Sunday rolled around, and another, and still no response. The man even drove around to 45th street each week, but he never saw her walking home from the square, or being dropped off by another uber. He waited and he prayed and trusted God.

Finally, the next week came around and Mr. Miller couldn't take it any longer. He drove to 45th street and stopped in front of the house. He walked to the door and knocked. And waited. He began to think nobody would answer, but as he turned to walk back to his car, a man opened the door.

“What?” He asked with a thick accent. The man was only in his early 40s, but gray hair filled his head and face. He had an unkempt bushy beard and wore sweatpants and a t-shirt that

must have been worn for days. He had dark tan skin, sharp eyebrows, and squinting eyes. Mr. Miller could smell just from the crack in the door that the house reeked of alcohol and tobacco. A cigarette in the man's hand proved this to be true. Mr. Miller took all of this in and knew it must have been the girl's father.

"I'm so sorry to bother you, sir, but I was just wondering if you have a daughter around the age of 18 who lives here?" Mr. Miller said. The man's face tightened, his thick eyebrows closing the small gap in between them.

"Not any longer, did she send you here?" He asked sharply.

"No, she didn't send me here," The man paused for a second, confused by why she would have sent him to her own home and what he meant by any longer. "I just came to see if she is alright, that's all."

"How should I know?" The man said, clearly growing frustrated.

"She is your daughter is she not?" the man asked. "You see, I've been her uber driver home every Sunday for weeks. There hasn't been a week I haven't driven her here, and I watched her walk into this home. I was just concerned for her safety, that's all. I apologize if this is out of my place, but I was concerned as she is so young and I didn't know her situation. I figured this was her home and you were her father, that's all."

"She is not my daughter any longer, and I am no longer her father." The man practically spat these words. Mr. Miller was surprised by the sudden hatred that had built into the man's eyes. "I think you'd better be leaving." The man began to close the door.

"Please, sir, I know I should not bother you any longer, but I just want to know if she is alright." The Man pleaded.

"You must not have known her well enough to know that she was a devout Muslim in an even more devout Muslim household. Our family has a long line of Muslim heritage and we are very proud of it. She must have lied to you the way she lied to me about her faith. I went into her room one night a couple of weeks ago to find her on her knees by her bed. I thought she was praying to our god Allah, so I left. When I went into her room in the morning though, she had fallen asleep right on the floor there clutching a Bible to her chest. She is dead to me now." Her father said this bitterly, but Mr. Miller caught glimpses of sadness. Mr. Miller knew what

happened when Muslims abandoned their faith. He had heard the stories of daughters and sons being kicked out of their homes, disowned by their own family permanently, treating and remembering them as dead. But, despite this, Mr. Miller also knew of these forgotten children, like sheep, finding their way to their Shepherd, their true Father, who loved them and accepted them into His arms. He forgave them for their sins, and called them His children. Mr. Miller thought of this all and knew that the girl was in better arms now. She had found her Heavenly Father. She now had a true family and one day a home in Eternity with Him. She no longer had to sneak home through the backyard and tip-toe to her room in fear. She no longer had to turn to earthly substances like she always did every Sunday night. She could satisfy her thirst like the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus told her, “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14). Mr. Miller rejoiced for years after this conversation. He blessed God that the girl had finally found Somebody she could always talk to. Somebody who would listen to her sorrows and troubles and comfort her just by His presence and Word alone. Mr. Miller saw how good God was that day and for years after that. He prayed for her often, even though he didn’t even have a name to pray for. She remained “the girl” in all of these prayers. He never saw her again, but he rejoiced in God’s goodness.