

Impact

For the majority of my life they had just been people— people who I walked passed, drove passed, and completely and utterly ignored daily. And for the majority of my life, I blindly assumed that there wasn't anything else to do. For the most part, the majority of them were strangers, yet one stood out from all the rest.

Bitter and messy; that was my first impression of the small elderly woman who moved next door five years ago. The thing is, I hadn't even met her before spurring out those judgmental thoughts that loomed over my mind. I was actually the one who had ignorantly tripped over her freshly arrived packed boxes when I ran across the busy street, knocked everything over, and ultimately broke five of her fine china.

Of course by then, I had already run off to avoid being caught. I waited, expecting her to knock furiously at my front door and demand for money or some type of repayment. Although the fear came rushing faster than I could anticipate, she never did come.

Angry and eerie; those were my second impressions of her as I walked along her copper stone walkway with my younger sister to ask for Halloween candy. Lightly, I knocked on her door. Approaching footsteps dragged across the ground until the wooden door creaked open.

"Trick or treat!" My toothless sister immediately chimed. The opposite woman blinked a few times but her sight roamed over my shoulder, looking completely lost in another world.

I looked back to see some high school kids, about my age, attempting to cross the road while cars continued to zoom by. The older woman scowled before digging her slender fingers into the bowl of candy, grabbing a clump, and throwing it into my sister's awaiting bag.

"Thank you!" The fairy princess exclaimed before skipping towards the sidewalk, preparing to cross, too distracted by the beaming lights on the opposite side of the street. "Come on Tiffany," she screamed.

I raced after her, but she already began crossing the street. Cursing under my breath, I launched myself towards her and gripped tightly on her small feeble arms. "Miranda, I told you not to run off," I scolded, still partially out of breath. "Don't do that again. Otherwise, we'll have to go home," I warned.

"You kids know there are lights down the street for crossing, right?" A new voice interrupted. I turned back, only to see my neighbor standing with her arms crossed with a grimace on her face. Before I could defend myself, her door slammed shut on us.

"What's her problem," I mumbled under my breath.

Another month had passed since the incident and yet I couldn't stop thinking about what had happened. 'Besides, no one on this street ever uses the light to cross so why did she have to snap at us?' I thought bitterly to myself.

It wouldn't help to dwell on that matter considering I was already extremely late for my doctor's appointment. I had to run home, get a bus pass, and then meet my mother at the hospital. As I approached the familiar road, ready to cross to my house on the other side, I looked to my left to ensure that there was no approaching car. Seeing as there was none, I began to run across the road.

That's when it happened. The sound of screeching tires echoed my own screaming as the speeding car came into sight from a sharp turn. It occurred quickly and yet the pain stung heavily during impact. It wasn't long before I was knocked to the ground.

I could feel the aching sensation spread throughout my trembling body and all I could seem to do was whimper in absolute fear. The driver peaked at me from his window, his eyes widened in panic, unsure of how to react. I expected him to hop out and help me but no, that wasn't the case. To my surprise, he merely backed up and began to drive in the other direction.

The blood was evident as it oozed out from my leg. I tried my best not to cry as I looked around, but the growing pain stopped me from thinking clearly. My parents weren't at home. What would I do?

Suddenly, a warm blanket was wrapped around my shaking body. I looked up, stunned by the sight. It was her, the elderly woman next door, the woman who I had tried to avoid at all costs. The tears became impossible to hold back. By then, my vision became hazy and the excruciating agony became too much to overcome. And that was when I blanked out.

A few hours later, I awoke to a bright ray seeping through the window of my hospital room. By then, the pain had settled but it wasn't completely gone. I looked around, finally noticing my family standing around my bed, all with worrisome and relieved expressions on their faces, along with the woman who potentially saved my life.

I looked her in the eye, unsure of how to react. My injuries suddenly overshadowed by the dire need to respond. But I didn't know what to say. What could I have said anyway? My first, second, third, and all those other judgmental impressions didn't matter anymore. And yet even with this gratitude, I was speechless.

"Thank you," was all I could say. And by the softened look on her face, I think that was enough.

I had to stay in the hospital for two weeks after the incident. Sadly enough, when I finally did return home, she was gone. Apparently she checked herself into a nursing home because while she was trying to help me, she hurt her back. I visit her weekly and we talk casually about little things that happened to us, and laugh about trivial problems. I guess it was her actions that impacted me most.