

The Lady Looking for the Minister

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“I walked up and down that street for four or five hours, carrying my boy some of the time. I don’t know what it was about that street. I’ve walked nicer streets, richer streets. But this street was so close to where I stay, but so different. I kept getting these little cherries in my sandals. They fell off the trees; there was a lot of trees. There’s no trees on my street.

I saw the lady right off, middle aged, glasses. I told her I got out of the the hospital yesterday, and I’m meeting the minister here, but I can’t find his house and nobody knows where he lives. The minister, the deacon, he lives on this street, you’ve seen him, he wears cowboy boots outside his pants. I find his house he’ll give me four dollars, so I can buy my boy McDonald’s, take him home. She said she didn’t know a minister on the street. She didn’t shut me off. Usually when they answer, which they don’t usually do, they answer shorter, and they shut me off. Turn their back. She stood behind her fence, waiting like, for me to say something else. But I’d already asked in my way, if she wasn’t gonna give me anything I wasn’t gonna ask her bigger. I walked away, just kept walking on that street. There was a guy working on his truck across the street from the lady’s house; young guy, tall. I asked him about the minister, he just told me to get along, turned his back. He looks like I say another word he’s calling the police, or saying he’s calling the police, they never really do. “I’m callin’ the police.” He starts the truck and it won’t turn over. Yippee. I don’t laugh. I back off. As it is, they can’t make me get along. I’m not doing anything wrong, and I like this street in a way I don’t even know why. I don’t want to get along. I want to go inside a house. I want a glass of water, I want it the worst way. I’m gonna die of thirst right out here on their street. Our street.

Way later, way late in the day, the lady’s back in her yard again. This time I’m carrying my boy. Who knows, maybe she thought there was no boy, and there is no minister, and there never was a hospital; who knows what they think. We meet up at her fence, and she says, I’m glad you came back, I kept thinking about Jesus. So I figure her for a nut, but she looks harmless, and I’m very needy now. I need a coca cola. She’s got a house, she’s got a car. Change falls out in a car, lies on the floor, doesn’t do anybody any good. She can give it to me, do me some good. But, she’s not offering anything out loud, and I don’t like asking for funds. Can I have a drink of water? She nods and heads to her house, can I use your phone, call up find out which house is the minister’s house? Use your bathroom, be on my way. And I’m in. I’m in a house on this street. On this street that I like. I’m inside. Drinking water. with ice cubes in it. She gives me a towel and I take my boy in the bathroom. He pees and I do. I flush it just once; for the enviornment. My boy lies down on the tiles, they’re cool, and he’s been in the sun too long. Could I have a, could I have a, could I have? I don’t even know what to ask for. Could I sit down on that? I want to sit down on that for a minute, less than a minute. No, I’m not sick. I never go inside a house anymore. The places I go, they don’t have nice seats like this. They don’t have anything like this, there’s nothing like this in the places I go. I think if I could start from this a place like this, and then when I went out there, I could do something. The places where I stay, where I start from, when I leave there, I can’t do anything. If a person stayed in this place, and left this place, and went out there, she could do something. I don’t even know what I’m talking about, and the lady, she’s not any help. I don’t use the phone because I know nobody is at the other end. I carry my boy out, and she opens the gate for us. She hands me money, it’s not change, it’s money, but I don’t count it or anything. And I know I’m gonna leave the street now, I’m not going to stay on the street anymore. And I’m not gonna go back, that lady, she’d let me go back, But I’m not gonna go back.”