

Four Days of Short Stories I Story 1

~Welcomed After Closing~

by Thaddeus Coleman

“3:33, who should I be,” sung Sierra as she tried desperately to fight off her boredom. She sat at her desk, the store’s counter, trying to finish off the last of her assignments. There was only a single lamp lighting up the storefront. The store was actual only a small bookshop in the front. In the back and upstairs, it was just a regular house. The store was closed for the night and wouldn't be open again until after the weekend. Sierra was all alone and tired and bored. “4:44, same as before,” she continued listlessly.

Knock, knock.

A knocking at the door had interrupted her singing. She glared at the door to find a young man waving back at her. Sierra pointed to the sign on the door. On her in end read: WELCOME, on the stranger's end: CLOSED. He persisted, knocking on the door again and again. Annoyed, Sierra decided to get up and tell him to his face that the store was closed.

“We’re closed. Come back Monday,” said Sierra through the glass door.

“But your light’s still—” He grimaced and held his side for a moment. He quickly recovered, though and continued. “Your light. It’s still on.”

“I live here, too. We are closed, so leave.”

The stranger looked up at the sky, letting the rain water wash over his face, then returned his gaze to Sierra; giving her a long look. “Come on, just until the rain stops. Please.”

Sierra pinched a piece of her hair and let her fingers follow it to its end, before she replied. “I must look like a stupid kid to you. No!” The stranger responded to this reply by lifting a bit of shirt to reveal a fresh wound. Sierra’s eyes widen slightly.

“Can I just clean myself up a little? Please. Then I’m gone.” He looked boldly into her eyes. “Please.”

Sierra sat outside the bathroom where the stranger was taking a shower. Her legs up to her chin, she listened to the shower water mimic the sounds of the falling rain outside. “I made a mistake,” she thought to herself. The shower water stopped. She could hear the shower’s door open and damp footsteps moving about. A voice called to her from the other side of the door.

“Hey, where’s the mirror in here?”

“It’s broke,” Sierra answered back. “You can wear this old shirt. It’s might to a little small—”

The door opened and the stranger, with his lower body wrapped in towel, came out. “Thanks.” He said, taking the shirt and walking back inside. Sierra turned beet red for a second. “Where are your parents?” the stranger asked from the other side.

Sierra still somewhat flushed took a moment before she answered, “They’re on a business trip right now.”

“And left you in charged all by yourself? You gotta be pretty responsible. What are you fifteen? Sixteen?”

“Yes.”

“I won’t be trouble. I’ll be done and out the door in a second.”

Sierra pushed her legs closer to her body. After a few minutes the stranger emerged from the bathroom now sporting his new pink violent shirt. He puts his jacket on over it. In his right hand is the old slightly blooded shirt he came in with.

“Your restroom’s okay. I didn’t get blood anywhere.”

“You’re leaving now.”

“Yep, like I said. Thank you.”

He followed Sierra down the stairs and through the somewhat cluttered back portion of the store/house combo. Following Sierra to the front door, the stranger bumped into one of the bookshelves and a snow globe that had been sitting on the self fell. He caught it.

“Gotcha!” the stranger exclaimed. Sierra turns around as she hears this. “Hmm. What’s that?”

Sierra snatched the little globe away from him. “Please just leave!” the girl yelled.

“Sure,” he said watching Sierra put the snow globe back in its place. “By the way, my name’s Alfie. It’s really a lot longer, but I like people to call me Alfie.” Alfie walked to the door, turned around and said “This world’s not so scary, right? Thanks again.”

After he left, Sierra sat back at her desk and put her head down. She closed her eyes and didn’t move a muscle for a while, but she never went sleep. She was trying to think, but nothing

came to her. An hour went by and still her mind was blank except for, “5:55, nothing left to rhyme.” Then, like before, there was a knock, knock at the door interrupting her song. Her head bounced with curious excitement, but soon that dissolved away to a more dreadful feeling.

Two men dressed in extremely sharp black suits stood outside the door. They looked serious. Sierra approached the door slowly, tension build with every step. Her hands shook as she opened the door and voice crackled as she greeted them.

“I—I’m sorry. Closed. We’re closed I mean. I just—”

They cut her off, flashing their FBI badges to her.

“Have you had any visitors tonight?” said one. Sierra only stared, fixated on his choice of words. Tonight? It was hardly *tonight* anymore.

“He’s most likely injured,” said the other, “and dangerous.”

“Is he?” inquired Sierra.

“Very.”

The first man asked if she mind letting them step inside. When Sierra said she did the man made it very clear he wasn’t asking. Sierra stepped aside.

Inside, one of the agents, introduced himself as Mr. McAllen and sat with Sierra while the other, identified as Mr. Holland searched through her store/house combo.

“You don’t need to worry about any damage to this place,” said Mr. McAllen, “Mr. Holland is very professional. We won’t stay longer then we need too if we don’t find him.” Sierra stayed silent. “Do you want to know why I insisted on coming in? It’s because I could see you’re hiding something.”

“I’m not,” answered Sierra in a quiet voice.

“Where are your parents,” Mr. McAllen questioned her as he takes out a lighter and cigarette. He continued “I can’t imagine you run this place all by yourself.”

The act disturbed Sierra. It caused her to get up from her seat and forcibly remove the recently placed cigarette from the agent’s lips, walk it over to the trash can and throw it in. “There’s no smoking here,” she said, pointing to an old hand painted sign. “And my parents are out of state right now. They trust me to watch the shop.” She decided not to return to her seat and instead leaned against a bookshelf opposite of him. Mr. McAllen nodded.

“Downstairs is clear,” a shout came from the backroom. Mr. Holland emerged soon after, heading directly for the stairs with no care as to what was happening between Sierra and Mr. McAllen.

“He’s quick,” she thought aloud, watching him zoom past them. Her head tracking his every movement until she noticed that the snow globe was still out. She waited until Mr. Holland was up the stairs then moved somewhat quickly to the item. Mr. McAllen began his questioning again. She gave him simple answers as she tried to stealthily hide the item behind her back.

After a few more minutes, the Q and A came to an end and only silence was left until Mr. Holland came speeding down the stairs. He stopped and looked at Sierra before turning to Mr. McAllen and declared, “There was nothing. We should go.”

Sierra hurdled them to the door. The two agents stepped outside the shop, but before the girl had a chance to close the door, Mr. Holland remarked on the complete absence of mirrors in the shop of any kind.

“My father is very superstitious.” Sierra said, closing the door on them. They walked away.

Sierra receded to her desk, plopping her snow globe down on the table, and laying her head down in front of it. Today the store was closed. If she wanted to she could sleep in and rest all day. After the events of the night and the morning it seemed like a good idea. That is after she finished up her still unfinished homework. She sighed heavily before taking a deep, long look at her reflection in the glass of that curious little snow globe. “3:33, who can you see?”