Long Time, No See

It’s cold, although it’s nearly always cold these days. There’s a crisp chill in the air which has made people rush down the street like a flurry during a harsh snowstorm. I’m not like them at all though. I sit alone on the cold concrete floor at the corner of a street. It’s always the same street. I see people look at me as they quickly walk past. They look down at me with pity and disgust. I do not know why they pity me. There is nothing about me to take pity on. I just like to listen.

 I like to think that people have different stories and that everyone has a different life, different memories. I find it interesting to listen to the constant chatter that fills the streets. People are so busy talking about their own problems that they don’t hear what other people have to deal with. At a young age, I liked to think that no matter what problems you have, you don’t know what may be happening to the people around you. Their problems may be much worse, so I sit on the corner now because I want to.

 I don’t have a bad life given the fact that I spend my time on a street corner. My parents love me but they don’t understand why I sit on a corner for hours on end. I do it to try and help and once in a while, I can. When I started sitting at the corner about two years ago, it was a few weeks after my high school graduation. I had heard a phrase that made me think about when I would see my friends again. All of my old friends were studying to be doctors, dentists and veterinarians and they had left me behind in the haze of university without a goodbye. I was just there not knowing what to do with my life. About a year after sitting on the corner, I met a girl. She was different. It was windy and out of all the people on the street, she too was sitting down. She wasn’t sure of herself. That’s my problem, I’m not sure either.

 Now, I still see the girl, although I have forgotten her name. She has moved on with her life, is studying to be a teacher and is about to get married. She got past her self-loathing and criticism and accepted herself, however I seem to not be able to do the same. I envy her but at the same time I don’t. I want to do something with my life but vice versa, I wouldn’t mind just sitting here. I wouldn’t mind being recognised as “the woman on the corner” instead of “the woman who cured cancer” because what I do makes me happy. I compare myself to photographers and actors and I think “we’re not that different” because in reality, we all do what we are passionate about and I’m just passionate about something a bit more unique. In my opinion, it’s a good thing.

 The problem about sitting here is that you can get lonely. It was something I struggled with for weeks until I realized that I wasn’t actually alone. Being alone is when you have no one around you but when you’re sitting on a street corner, you’ll have hundreds. You will never actually be alone and I find that reassuring.

 It’s been two years though and nobody has asked me for my story. People walk down the street and think that I’m homeless. Most people probably don’t consider that I have a life outside of sitting here. Sometimes I see the same faces, but most of the time they don’t look back at me and that’s one of the worst feelings I’ve experienced. It’s like if you moved to a different city and after a few years, you came back and saw one of your old friends, and you knew it was them but they didn’t know it was you. It’s horrible. It’s expected though. Who would remember one insignificant person at the corner of a street when they have so much other stuff to worry about themselves? I’m nothing important to them.

 I have come to the conclusion that I’m in a crisis in which I like what I do but I also don’t know if I want do something else. In the end, I’ll still be the woman on the corner, never talking but always listening. I’ll always be the person who is always there but no one acknowledges. This is the way I like it. I sit alone, but not alone. Instead of using speech, I hear. Silent. I collect the ideas and hear the untold stories of the people who are speaking. Every day, I tell myself that stories are knowledge. Everything is a story when you look at it and I’m just a collector of them. Stories are forgotten but you can write them down so you can re-discover and re-live them and I’m that book, even if you don’t know it.

The one problem with this is that when you spend your time hearing other people’s stories, you don’t have any time to create your own which is my biggest regret. What is life when at the end, you can’t look back and see all the wonderful things you’ve done and instead you have to look back at years of sitting on a street corner and other people’s memories? It’s a hard choice but overall I feel it is a good one. If someone whose memory I’ve heard was to die, their memory will still carry on in the overheard stories I’ve collected, which I think is the best thing I can do in this life.

Even if I’m at this corner for years to come, I’ll still be happy. I haven’t figured myself out completely but it’s nice not to focus on yourself and to just figure out someone else first. That’s what I was told before that girl left the last time I saw her. I wonder how she’s doing. I hope I’ll see her soon. When I do, she’ll say that phrase, my favourite phrase: “Long Time No See.”

Word Count: 1039