

## **It's All in the Name**

Only one person knew the truth.

And his name was Tom. Not that most people remembered.

You couldn't blame them, however. Tom was just, objectively put, very average-looking. He was of average height, average proportions, average-looking brown hair, and of average facial features. That, in addition to his painstakingly common name, created a persona of an average-looking man whose face and name no one could really remember. Rather than coming off as mysterious, which might have been more bearable to some, he was just forgettable.

Now, people forget. Anniversaries are forgotten. Important deadlines are forgotten. Empty promises are forgotten. It happens, and eventually after time, sometimes the fact that they were forgotten also becomes lost in memory, but not without its consequences. Fights occur, bad grades are given, reputations are damaged, hearts break, but more often than not time heals, and people move on.

Then what happens when a supremely real character, made of flesh and bone, always ends up forgotten? What happens to them?

It's quite simple, actually. They get used to it.

In his 52 years of living, all Tom ever did was get used to it, and during that time he made many efforts to come to peace with his disheartening reality. For example, one day he would be watching the 7 o'clock evening cable news, and the screen would come alive with the news of a robber having been caught due to being recognized by his next-door neighbours.

*"If I were robbing a bank, at least I know I'd never get caught,"* he'd think to himself half-jokingly. *"No one would ever recognize me, let alone remember."* With that, he'd give a small

chuckle, marked with an unmistakable touch of sadness he thought would go away with a click of the remote.

But that sadness didn't leave him. Because only he knew the truth that sadly, most people seemed to miss.

The truth that his name was Tom.

And he was someone to remember, not forget.

Unfortunately, as the days passed, that all too familiar feeling of worthlessness clouded his view of the truth until all Tom could see at the beginning and end of each day was that black, gloomy cloud he just couldn't ignore.

It penetrated even the little details of Tom's everyday life, like when he forgot to pin his name tag on his navy blue blazer before leaving his apartment for work one crisp October morning. Tom only remembered what he had forgotten to do seconds after the bronze elevator doors had closed, riding down to the lobby where he worked.

*"People never remember my name. Not having my tag for a day wouldn't make a difference,"*  
Tom reasoned with himself between Floor 5 and 4.

### ***Ding***

Tom stepped out of the elevator and stepped onto the carpeted floor of the apartment lobby. To the right was a hall tunnelling into the mailroom, in the middle of the lobby was a huge fountain harbouring many pennies and nickels of wishful residents, and finally to the very left of the room, beside the glass front doors, was where he spent most of his day, behind the desk labelled, "Security".

He sauntered to the door that took him to the seat behind his desk and did what he did best - watch. Sitting at a desk for hours watching people come in and come out causes one to be revealed many truths. From today's session, Tom learned of Ms. Addison's affair with Mr. Linus, that Becky and her mother weren't on good terms lately, and that Mrs. Janie's son was planning to elope with his girlfriend. In the midst of eavesdropping on Mrs. Janie's son's dramatic plans to elope, Tom was distracted by a little girl asking her mother for a penny to throw into the fountain.

"Mommy, can I please -"

The mother turned her back to the big-eyed girl and waved her off, chattering on the phone. Feeling a sense of sympathy for her, Tom waved the child to his desk, reached into his bag for a penny and handed it to her.

She shrieked in excitement and ran to the fountain. The girl closed her eyes, muttered an inaudible phrase, and tossed the penny into the fountain. Her mother then came back from the mailroom and beckoned her daughter to follow her through the front doors. When the child passed the desk, she cheerily exclaimed, "Thank you, Mr. Tom!"

Tom's heart leapt.

Why, he wasn't even wearing his name tag.