

Two Flash Fictions

Robert Moore, Jr.

The Main Character

Monica was born with pink hair. Can you believe it? Pink. Hair. Nobody else was born with hair in shades other than the usual brown, blonde, or red. They all had nice, normal colors for their hair. Monica had pink. Could they have made it more obvious that she was the main character? To top it off, she was now 18 and had no memories of her childhood. Sure, there were pictures and elementary school friends, but the stories they told weren't memories. They just popped into her head, fully formed, as needed. No one else seemed to notice these things, but she did. Now she was 18, at her own birthday party, and resenting the lack of coherent flow to her life.

"Hey Monica. Happy Birthday." It was Thomas Redland, the boy she'd had a crush on since sixth . . . No! No, he wasn't. She'd never seen him before today. She had never seen him before this party and his birthday wish to her.

She knew she was supposed to blush, smile nervously, and stammer out, "Thank you." She felt the urge. It was a compulsion driving her to do these silly things for a complete stranger. Her face heated. Her

tongue worked to form those two words. And she fought it. She might be in a movie, but she would not follow the script.

Her mouth opened and she thrust the first thing that came to her mind out. "Fuck you, loser." There was a gasp, and for the first time in her life, Monica felt free.

It took her a moment to recognize that the gasp hadn't come from her. In fact, it hadn't come from anyone in the room. Her living room was silent and everyone in it was still. The smells of burning candles and icing disappeared.

She'd done it. She'd beaten the script, and with more far-reaching consequences than she'd considered. The world reasserted itself quickly, though, and as everything started moving again, she felt the urge to run from the room in embarrassment. Gritting her teeth, she forced herself to stay where she was. She lifted a hand against the weight of the world and waved away her words.

"Sorry about that, Thomas. I'm sure you're a nice guy, and I shouldn't have said that, but I don't really know you, and I had to break the script." Monica turned to a random spot in the room to look at the camera and said, "Right?"

Oblivious

Mark Watkins is heading to work this morning. Only, he can't just go to work. He has to be special and stop by the coffee shop. Getting himself a cup would be understandable, but no, he has to get something for the entire office. Four lattes, two mochas, and some herbal thing for the intern that pretends to not like sugar. Oh, and he can't forget the Danishes.

He doesn't notice how pathetic they think he is. How can someone be so oblivious? All the whispers and covert glances go right over his head. They think he's a chump: trying to buy their friendship and goodwill with pastries and caffeine.

It doesn't stop there. He's late for a meeting with the marketing team, but of course he holds the elevator for the mailroom clerk. He stands there smiling while the clerk hesitates, as if deadlines are optional when you're being decent.

And heaven forbid the intern has a breakdown. Her account report is due tomorrow, and instead of working on his own, he doodles a cat on a sticky note. As if that's not sappy enough, he writes, "You're doing great!" on it and gives it to her, like that fixes anything. She smiles, sure, but they always smile. The whispers start once he's gone.

He lets a coworker step in front of him at lunch. Of course he does, then smiles as his food gets cold. Later, he refills the coffee pot instead of leaving it for someone else. He picks up the office assistant's dropped memo. He'll change the world for certain.

Now it's quitting time, and it's raining. At least he has his umbrella. Not for long, though. There's a kid waiting at the bus stop, hunched up against the cold and wet. It's not going to matter to this kid, but he goes over and hands them his umbrella anyway. It's still a long walk home, but now his shirt clings to him and water drips into his eyes through his rain-flattened hair.

His key is stiff in the lock to his apartment, probably from the rain. He pushes the door closed and stands there while water squelches in his shoes. His head drops against the door. Water drips on the floor in slow, patient taps. That'll need cleaning later.

"Can I have just one quiet day?" he asks.

Silence fills the apartment, settling around him like a comforting blanket.

One breath.

Two.

You see? A little cold and wet, by his own choice, and he's falling apart.

Robert Moore, Jr., is the lab manager for the Department of Physics & Astrophysics. He's also a student pursuing a certificate in writing, editing, and publishing. In his limited spare time, he writes, considering himself a storyteller and hoping others will join him around the fire to share a tale. In his travels around the country, he's also managed to take an interesting photograph or two.