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## Off We Go!

Janice Holmes entered the small meeting room, dropped her things on the table, and sat down. She looked up at the wall clock which read 8:25. Well, at least she made it on time. On the wall to her right hung a large wooden sign with the words *Mason Daily Record* in black letters. Pictures of old newspapers and headlines covered the walls. She looked at her phone. 8:29.

Right on time, Tom Chiswell, the 52-year-old owner and editor of the *MDR*, entered and sat in the seat just below the sign. Janice didn't know him well. He didn't seem unhappy, but he didn't seem happy, either. Just very serious and business-like.

“Morning, Janice. Welcome to the *Record*. Ready to get started?”

This was Janice Holmes’s first day at work. She had just finished studying **journalism** at university. This was her first real job, and she had Tom Chiswell to thank for that.

“All ready, Mr. Chiswell.”

“Tom. Call me Tom. We keep things pretty simple here.”

“OK, Tom it is.”

“No sign of Lee yet?”

Lee Crane was the other **reporter** at *MDR*. Janice met him at her interview. She didn’t know him very well either, but she didn’t think she wanted to know him well. He seemed to like himself too much.

“I haven’t seen him. Maybe he’s already working,” Janice said.

“Maybe he’s still sleeping,” Tom answered. “Anyway, let me get you started. A car struck the front of the Garden Café late last night or early this morning. Afterwards the driver kept on going, just drove away. Made a big mess. You’d better head over there and talk to the police, the owners, and some of the neighbors. Get statements from anyone you can and then report back to me.”

“Drunk driver? Hit and run?”

“Could be, but that’s what the police are there for. Go ask your questions.”

“I’m on my way.”

Just then the door opened once again, and Lee Crane walked in, holding drinks and a paper bag.

"I got breakfast," he said.

"And I got a story," Janice answered and continued out the door.

"Talk to you later, Tom."



## Picking Up the Pieces

Janice drove to the town square and parked near the Garden Café. She could see two policemen standing outside the shop, talking to a woman. She walked over and looked at the scene: broken door, broken window, glass everywhere.

"Excuse me," she said as she went over to one of the policemen.



"Yes, may I help you?" the man asked as he continued writing in a small hand-held notebook.

"I need to get some details about what happened here."

"And you are . . .?" the policeman asked, looking up at Janice.

"Janice Holmes, from the *Daily Record*," she responded.

"You must be new. Haven't seen you before."

"This is my first day. And it's my first case, so I was hoping you could tell me what's going on."

The policeman closed his notebook and faced her.

"Well, all right, Miss Holmes from the *Daily Record*. I'm Officer Stuckey. Welcome to the mean streets of Mason. Seems like about 4 o'clock this morning someone got a little careless while they were driving and hit the front of Miss Evans's diner. That's her talking to Officer Lahey over there."



Miss Evans looked to be about 35 with short red hair. Her face appeared a little worn out.

"How about the driver and the car?" asked Janice.

"Gone. Disappeared. Must have backed up and just kept driving."

"Did anyone see or hear anything?"

"Miss Evans and her roommate sure did. They live on the second

floor, and things shook pretty good when the car struck.”

“Have you talked to anyone else?”

“Not yet. We’re just getting started.”

Janice looked up the road in one direction for as far as she could see and then in the other. Then she looked back at the store with its broken door, window and glass. She had an unsure look on her face.

“Do you have any ideas, Officer Stuckey? Just seems kind of strange behavior for car and driver to disappear like that.”

“Hey, without strange behavior, I wouldn’t have a job. Give me a little more time, Miss Holmes, and I’ll give you all the ideas you’ll need.”

Janice waited a few minutes until the other officer finished talking to Miss Evans, the owner. She then walked over and spoke to the woman.

“Hi, I’m with the *Daily Record*. Looks like you had quite the night. I’m sure things are not as bad as they seem right now,” Janice said.

“We’ll be OK. Nothing that a little paint and cleaning won’t fix. Inside is fine. What makes me sick is that we only opened last month. We were just getting things off the ground.”

“I’m so sorry for you. Do you mind if I ask a few questions?” Janice asked.

“No, not at all.”

“And do you mind?” Janice said, holding up her phone. “I’ve got a really bad memory.”

"No problem," the woman answered.

"So, can you tell me what happened?"

"Well, we were asleep up above the café. Didn't hear anything before it happened, and then all of a sudden, we heard a big boom! Happened right at 4:04. Ran over to the window and saw something flying away up the road, but I couldn't tell you if it was a car or truck or what. Just too dark."

"You say 'we.' Who else was with you?"

"Just Ruby and me. That's her over there."

Janice looked over in the direction Miss Evans was pointing. She saw a woman with long black hair inside the diner cleaning things up.

"And Ruby is . . .?" the reporter asked.

"She works with me in the café."

Janice recorded everything on her phone. The problem was that Miss Evans really didn't add anything to what she already knew. She thanked the woman and said she might need to speak with her again later.

Just then she received a message on her phone. It was from Lee Crane. It read, "Meet me for coffee at The Beanery in 15 minutes. Got something to discuss with you."

Janice felt as if she were being given an order, but since it was her first day on the job, she felt she couldn't say no. She said a few goodbyes, got in her car, and headed towards the coffee shop.