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Who Knows Where It Goes

Lawrence Block

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A Story From The Dark Side, by Lawrence Block

When the waitress brought him his coffee, Colliard managed a nod and a smile. He added milk but no sugar, stirred, looked out the window at the entrance to the four-story commercial building across the street. He didn't really want the coffee, he'd had enough coffee today, and this cup wouldn't make him any more alert than he already was. Its only discernible effect would come hours from now, when he'd want to sleep and it wouldn't let him.

Of course that might be difficult anyway.

Maybe he should have ordered decaf. He never did, he never even thought of it until he already had a cup of regular coffee in front of him. He'd never been able to see the point of decaf. Why drink the stuff at all if not for the caffeine? It never tasted as good as you hoped it would. Sometimes, if it was particularly good coffee, the smell was wonderful. But then you took a sip, and all you got was disappointment. And caffeine.

He picked up the spoon, stirred the coffee some more, put the spoon down. And left the cup in its saucer. It wasn't as *Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side)* though he had to drink it. He'd had to order it, so that he could have this table by the window, but now that she'd brought it to him he could sit here until closing time. It wasn't as though they needed the table for another customer. The diner was mostly empty, and would likely remain that way, like every place else in town. Like every other town in the country.

Hard times. Sometimes it was tough not to take it personally, to see the entire break in the economy as having been aimed specifically at him. When he got that way he forced himself to take a good look around. And it was pretty easy to see that it wasn't just him. Everywhere he looked, businesses were failing and men and women were out of work. Corporations, absolute household names that had been around as long as he could remember, were going out of business. Banks were imploding. Retailers, from the big box chains to the hardware store on the corner, were turning off the lights and locking the doors. As an economy move, someone had quipped, the light at the end of the tunnel had been turned off.

A matter of months ago Colliard had *Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side)* been sitting on top of the world, and the perch was all the sweeter for the time and effort it had taken him to get there. He'd sweated it out to get the union card—an MBA from a top university. He'd lived off his savings and hit the books hard, and the degree got him his first corporate job. He worked hard, and when the headhunters came calling, he was ready to move up. He earned the promotions, he got the cash and prizes, and he bought the right house and married the right woman. He earned big bucks and lived within his income, and when the chance came along to start his own company, he jumped at it.

And made it work. And figured he had it made.

“Warm that up Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) for you?”

It was the waitress, coffee pot in hand. He smiled, shook his head. “I’ve had Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) too much coffee already,” he said. “But thanks.”

“Something to eat?”

He shook his head.

“That’s okay,” Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) she said. “You sit there as long Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) as you like. That way people look in the window, they see we’re still open. Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) You know Sacco’s? On the next block?”

He didn’t know the Who Knows Where It Goes (A Story From the Dark Side) neighborhood at all, but the question didn’t seem to require an answer.

“Thirty years they been there,” she said. “Good times and bad. Friend of mine’s worked there twelve years herself, and Friday afternoon the owner called them all together and told them it was the last day. Just like that. Twelve years, thirty years just like that. How can a business just disappear, here one day and gone the next?”

Who Knows Where It Goes A Story From The Dark Side

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