

The Realist  
by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

A busy city street. People go this way and that.

The VENDOR (47), gruff and haggard, hands change to a pretty FEMALE CUSTOMER (36).

FEMALE CUSTOMER

Thank you.

VENDOR

Have a good day.

The female customer walks away.

A MALE CUSTOMER (29), well-kempt and clean cut, takes her place at the newsstand.

The male customer picks up a copy of the Los Angeles Times. He reads the headline.

MALE CUSTOMER

"8 dead in Pennsylvania school  
shooting; 13 wounded."

The vendor, thinking he heard something, looks towards the male customer.

VENDOR

Did you say something?

MALE CUSTOMER

Hmm? Oh, just reading.

VENDOR

Speaking of reading, are you gonna  
pay for that?

MALE CUSTOMER

Not sure. Haven't decided yet.

(To himself)

Continued on seven.

Male customer flips to page seven.

Something catches his eye. He examines the page closely before he chuckles and shakes his head.

MALE CUSTOMER

Jesus.

VENDOR  
What's so funny?

MALE CUSTOMER  
This story. An 11-year old killed  
six kids and two teachers because  
some kid stole his milk at lunch.

VENDOR  
I heard about that. It's  
disgusting, if you ask me.

MALE CUSTOMER  
I didn't, but you're right. But,  
it's also one of those things you  
have to laugh at.

VENDOR  
Not me.

MALE CUSTOMER  
You don't laugh because it's funny.  
You laugh because it's absurd.  
(Sighs)  
What the hell happened to the  
world?

VENDOR  
Spoken like a true pessimist.

The male customer's grip on the newspaper tightens as he  
cracks his jaw.

MALE CUSTOMER  
I'm not a pessimist.

VENDOR  
No? Could've fooled me.

MALE CUSTOMER  
I'm a realist. There's a  
difference.

The male customer goes back to reading the paper.

MALE CUSTOMER  
I hate when people confuse the two.  
It's one of the most irritating  
things in the world.

VENDOR  
It's not that big a deal.

MALE CUSTOMER

It is to me. A pessimist believes there's a rain cloud hovering over them all the time. A realist accepts the fact that sometimes, it does rain on them but rains on others, too.

VENDOR

How about an optimist?

MALE CUSTOMER

(Chuckles)

Well, an optimist would say, "It's not raining on me. It's the natural rain cycle."

VENDOR

It is the rain cycle.

MALE CUSTOMER

See what I mean?

VENDOR

No.

MALE CUSTOMER

It's like if I said I were going to kill myself. What do you say?

VENDOR

I'd ask why.

MALE CUSTOMER

Another optimistic phrase. Rather than accepting that it's something I want to do, you'd prefer to have me talk about it in hopes of stopping me.

VENDOR

If you say so.

The male customer folds the newspaper up.

MALE CUSTOMER

You know? Howard Beale was right. Everybody knows things are bad.

VENDOR

That was a great movie.

The male customer cracks his neck.

MALE CUSTOMER

And, it's just as relevant as ever.

VENDOR

Sadly, yeah.

MALE CUSTOMER

You know, I think I am gonna buy it. A tribute to the best we have to offer.

VENDOR

Meaning what?

MALE CUSTOMER

You've heard people say "the world's going to hell in a hand basket", haven't you?

VENDOR

Yeah.

MALE CUSTOMER

Well, this newspaper represents the worst day in history, doesn't it? And, likewise, is the best for every day that comes after it.

VENDOR

You're really fucked up, man, you know that?

A man in a business suit, JACK (44), walks up behind the male customer.

MALE CUSTOMER

Someone's gotta be. It'd be a boring world, otherwise.

VENDOR

It would definitely be easier to have a normal conversation with someone, that's for sure.

MALE CUSTOMER

Touché.

Jack clears his throat, as if to hurry him up. The male customer motions to Jack with his eyes.

MALE CUSTOMER

Optimist.

VENDOR  
How do you mean?

MALE CUSTOMER  
He thinks by doing that, it'll make  
me hurry up... and he's right.  
(Taps the newspaper)  
How much?

VENDOR  
\$3.50.

The male customer grabs a \$5 from his wallet.

MALE CUSTOMER  
There's five. And, I bid you adieu.

VENDOR  
Yeah. Have a good one.

The male customer walks away.

The vendor and Jack watch as the male customer walks away.

JACK  
Who was that?

VENDOR  
I don't know. Just some guy.

They scoff. The vendor looks at Jack who holds a magazine.

VENDOR  
The usual, Jack?

JACK  
Yeah, thanks.

The vendor looks back where the male customer went, but he  
has disappeared amongst the dozens of people on the street.

VENDOR  
Hmm...

JACK  
What's up?

VENDOR  
Just thinking.

FADE OUT.