

# How I Am (1 of 29)

## Joseph Kerschbaum

\*People talking in the background\*

This cafe' usually isn't this busy on a Thursday evening,  
But tonight, every table is taken.

At the table next to me, the ritual of rotation occurs as a woman with blonde hair, small hands, and a small smile picks up her bag and leaves.

As she rises out of her seat, a man places his bag on the table, staking his claim on the valuable space that has been released.

Availability is fierce.

The man sets his large, blue backpack on the table, looks around, and walks out.  
As I stare at that bag, I wonder what this man studies.

Where is he from?

And does he smoke?

He set his bag down and walked out of the cafe' quickly. I can see him through the window. He's not smoking.  
He's looking around, talking on a cell phone, then he hangs up.

Why did he leave his bag here?

Possibly to save his seat?

Someone could steal his bag.

Or maybe there's something in that bag he doesn't want.

Just yesterday, a bomb detonated in Bali, killed 180 people.  
That sort of thing happens all over the world now.  
Why can't it happen in Indiana?

The man is still outside.

He had a dark complexion and could be of Middle-Eastern descent.

Not that I think everyone with a dark complexion is a terrorist, but why did this guy drop off a large bag and walk out?

Should I say something?  
Would I be a racial profiler?  
Do I suffer from media poisoning?

Have I been so changed by what I've seen recently that anyone who leaves a bag on a table is ready to make a statement?

And claim lives?  
And where did that guy go?

I should say something to him.

He should know that these are sensitive times and one should consider one's actions more closely.

He might take offense.

But he has to know.

And I'm ready to be on the offensive, should he become defensive.

If fact, I hope he does become defensive because I want to drag my point home to this prick.

If he isn't a terrorist, then I'll teach him a lesson, and if he is, a terrorist, then I'll never see my father again.

I'll never be able to ask him about Vietnam and the smell of a morning you never though you'd see.

My sister needs help and she won't get it from me.

With one tick, I will become the smudge on the family history, a springboard into nostalgia of better days that haven't been that good.

When this bomb goes off, I'll be 1 of 29 dead in the newspaper.

And I'll be a victim of the bigger picture.

The world picture.

The last picture.

I'll have as this bag scatters me all over and ends me.

Should someone's passing be so sorrowful and full of rage, I thought it was supposed to be peaceful and warm and, and the warm air from outside brushes my face.

And the man sits down at his seat with a cup of coffee.

He sets the bag on the floor and pulls out a large textbook.

Chemistry, I think.

He looks up from his book and nods at me.

The world isn't what it used to be.

Or is it just me?

\*People talking once again\*

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Lyrics submitted by Sarah K.

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