

Liliana Amore

### **Situational Awareness**

Less than five years ago, a woman in a red minivan chose to run a yield sign that resulted in a head on collision with my mother's vehicle. The neighbors complained to the police at the scene of the accident that they'd seen that same woman run that sign every day. No one paid any attention to that sign. They spoke of near misses, squealing brakes, and fender benders as a daily norm at this corner. It wasn't until this crash, one of them stood before the city council and demanded the sign be changed to a stop sign. Within twenty-four hours of that meeting, a new stop sign was erected. It took a head on collision for someone to instigate a change.

The Oklahoma City bombing and then shortly after, 9-11 terrorist acts against our nation changed how we look at the world around us, even how we view each other. A lone backpack, a straggler, some mislaid papers, these things posed no great threat twenty-five years ago, but today suspicion and fear instigate a new reality. Our laws have changed and innumerable safety precautions have been instituted all around us at every level. We have found our voices and replaced fear with perseverance. Situational awareness driven by compassion is responsible for the random acts of kindness that has overcome the initial fear. We have united against the evil that has decimated our people.

Our towns and communities have come together in triumphs and trials and have proven to be our greatest resource. Neighborhood watches, community centers, food pantries and various other programs have populated throughout, providing for the needs of our citizens. There is help for those who seek it. We are all more alert and ready to intervene when necessary. Intervention starts at the local level. Making lives better for everyone in our community. Simple

things like cleaning up trash on the side of the road, donating outgrown jackets to the school coat drive, or even bringing old towels and blankets to the local animal shelter, these little things promote kindness and generosity which gives birth to hope.

We are better protected with the laws and systems in place to help prevent large catastrophes we've experienced as a nation. These protections have filtered to the lowest level, we are watching out for each other and looking for ways to make our communities safer. Sometimes that means a yield sign becomes a stop sign, in hopes to prevent future collisions. There are still those who run stop signs. The difference is they know someone is paying attention.