Evil - a (very) short story

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What is evil?

I've been reading a book that tried, as an aside (ambitious as it was), to answer that question. It's a good book about bad people. Evil people, even, and why they did the evil things they did. The sort of evil that survives the 24-hour news cycle, that lives an indefinite life subsisting on morbid curiousity and sheer horror.

It intrigued me how the author — aquainted as he was with that kind of Evil, and assuredly with the sort of everyday evil we are all guilty of giving and receiving — that the magnitude of the act had nothing to do with his definition. No, the answer in his eyes was simpler than that.

I paused my thoughts for a moment to look back at the woman lying on the road behind me, her blood pooling in a growing halo around her head. I mentally traced the small of my back where she had shoved me a few instants before. The driver of the now-stopped SUV had flown out in a horrified hurry, now trying to choke out some apology. He needn't have bothered; the light of life had already departed from the lady's eyes.

And so the moment passed.

Evil, the author wrote, could perhaps best be described as the absence of empathy.