

WIND TRAVELER

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It was last October when I met him. It was an experience that I feel I have to share.

During this time of year, on Saturday mornings, I have a chance to enjoy the brisk autumn air. It is then that I love to go for a jog around the park, visiting with my friends whom I meet there every week.

As I was walking to the park, I noticed the sun was rising above the leafless trees with a golden glow, making the morning feel very special. I look forward to days like this.

Just as I started running, I saw a young man under a tree just starting to stand up. It appeared that he had slept there during the cold night.

When I caught up to him, he was walking down the walk with a small bag over his shoulder. He was looking up at the sky and the last leaves falling from the trees. I think he was enjoying the day as much as I was.

As I passed him, he said, “Hello”.

I greeted him as well.

He yelled after me, “Sir, can you give me a dollar so I can get something to eat?”

I stopped and turned around to look at him. I thought for a moment, and then for some reason, I offered to take him to a restaurant to get breakfast instead of just giving him a buck.

He was very courteous and said, “Sure, why not.”

I decided to give up my morning run.

We walked silently to the restaurant on the corner where I have breakfast almost every morning and sat down at a booth facing each other.

He had a kind face that showed that life had been hard for him. When he took off his cap I saw that his hair was long and rather unkempt. His skin was dark from walking in the sun.

“Is there something you would like to eat?” I asked.

“Let me see the menu. Then I’ll tell you,” he replied.

“The omelets here are very good,” I suggested.

He nodded in agreement.

The waitress came over and said, “Hello Justin. It’s nice to see you. How long has it been since you were here last?”

“Yesterday, remember?” I replied, looking up at her, a little confused.

“Just kidding. What would you like today? Your regular order?” she asked.

“Yes, the full breakfast with wheat toast,” I answered. “And for my friend here, a western omelet with potatoes.”

“Who’s your friend? I’ve never seen him here before,” she inquired.

He looked up at her and smiled. Then he looked at a tag that was hanging from his bag. He read the name written on it.

“My name is Jonesy Roberts. It’s nice to meet you,” he said.

She smiled and walked away.

“So, Jonesy what brings you to Springfield? Have you been here long?” I questioned.

“I’m not sure. I think I got here yesterday,” he answered, and then he took a drink of his coffee. “This is really good coffee.”

“I agree. It’s one of the reasons I eat here so often.” I paused, “Where are you headed?”

“I don’t know. I just take it one day at a time. I could be just about anywhere tomorrow,” he replied, never looking up but staring down into his cup, which he seemed to be enjoying.

Our food came and we sat quietly eating. Jonesy ate very quickly like it was his first real meal in a while.

“So, when was the last time you had a good meal?” I asked.

“I’m not really sure. The days just seem to flow together,” he responded.

He looked out the window at the passing cars. He seemed deep in thought.

Then he turned back to me, and said, “Thank you for the meal. It’s very generous of you.”

“My pleasure. May I ask where you are from?” I was curious about why he was so unsure of himself.

“From many places. I travel a lot. I don’t really have a home, but I get along,” he answered and then took another bite of food.

He didn’t have many answers to my questions.

We sat for a long time. I didn’t have anywhere special to go that day, so we chatted mostly about the weather.

He began to look around for something, and then he opened his bag. Looking curiously around inside, he found a box and when he opened it, he took out a pair of glasses and put them on.

“Ah, that’s much better. I can see you now,” he laughed.

The box was on the table in front of him. I saw some letters and assorted things in the box that looked like they were very special to him. What caught my eye was a purple object lying at the bottom.

“May I ask what the purple thing in your box is?” not really expecting him to have an answer.

“This?” he asked. “I’m not sure. It’s in this box I found in my bag. I don’t know if I have ever seen it before.”

That seemed very odd to me, but since he was homeless, I guessed he may have found the box, put it into his bag and then forgot about it.

“Where are you going today?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I think I’ll walk around the town and see what’s here,” he stated matter-of-factly.

I felt sorry for him and offered for him to come to my home to take a shower. At first he said no, but I insisted. Then he agreed. We walked to my apartment, which was not very far from the restaurant.

“This is a wonderful town. The air is clean, and the sky is so blue. I’m sure you enjoy living here,” he commented as we walked the three blocks to my building.

“Yes, it’s a nice place. I’m glad that I moved here,” I responded.

As we entered my apartment, he stopped and looked around.

“This is nice. Have you lived here for a long time?” he asked.

“About two years. I moved here from Chicago. I got a really good job and the cost of living here is much less than other places,” I responded. “I especially like the parks.”

I pointed to the shower.

“Go ahead and get cleaned up. There’s a towel on the wall you can use,” I directed him.

Jonesy was about the same size as me, so I took out some clothes I felt he could wear and laid them out on my bed.

I called into the bathroom, “Hey Jonesy, there are some clean clothes on my bed. Go ahead and put them on. We can throw your clothes into the laundry and get them cleaned for you.”

“Thanks!” came the reply.

When he was done, he walked out into the living room looking much better.

“That felt wonderful, thank you!” he stated.

We sat and talked for a little while at my kitchen table. He didn’t have much to say. It seemed like he was lost.

I spoke up, “I was planning to go to the store. Do you want to come with me?”

“Why not. I have nothing else to do,” he replied.

“Since it’s such a nice day, I think we’ll walk. It isn’t too far, and I don’t need a lot of things,” I suggested. “I know a shortcut through the forest that will make it faster.”

I loaned him a jacket and grabbed my windbreaker. We left the apartment and started into the forest. We weren’t gone more than five minutes when two men jumped out from behind a tree and demanded that we give them our money and watches. They had guns pointed at us.

I raised my hands slowly and went down on my knees. I knew better than to try to fight them off.

Suddenly, the two men went flying in different directions. It happened so fast that I had no idea how. I looked up and saw Jonesy holding a gun and telling the men to run away or he would shoot them. They ran off.

He helped me up and brushed the dirt off my pants.

“What just happened?” I asked.

“I took care of those guys. They won’t mess with you anymore,” he said calmly.

I was still shaking from fright.

“Let’s go back to my apartment. Those guys scared the daylights out of me,” I said, still looking to see where they had gone.

“It’s okay, we can go to the store. You’ll be safe,” he said while walking down the path to the store in front of me.

I followed, not sure if it would be safe, however Jonesy made me feel a lot better.

After buying a few things, we returned to the apartment.

I called the police to report the attempted robbery knowing that they would probably not be caught, but it made me feel better knowing the police were alerted to the problem.

We sat and watched a football game. He kept asking me questions about what teams were playing and who the players were.

When his clothes were clean, I put them into his bag.

“Help yourself to some cookies and milk. I’ll be right back. I have to use the bathroom,” I excused myself.

I went to the bathroom and when I came out, Jonesy was gone. He had taken his bag and left the clothes I had given him on the bed. He kept the shoes I gave him, which was fine. I had an extra pair of running shoes.

I sat down on my bed wondering where he had gone.

Thinking to myself, I thought, “Should I try to find him?”

Then I had an idea. I went to my computer to see if there was something about him on the internet.

I looked up his name and I was surprised to find that there was a long article about him.

His name is John Andrew “Jonesy” Roberts. I found out that he had served in the US army and was injured during a battle in Iraq. He had been hurt twice. The second time he was hit in the head after a bomb exploded next to the road he was patrolling.

While in the service he received training in the Special Forces, which meant he had very special skills in self-defense. That explained how he was able to handle the two robbers.

After his injury, he was taken to an Army hospital where he was diagnosed with memory

loss. He wasn't able to remember what had happened the day before, and he would have trouble even knowing his name. Every day was going to be a new experience for him. He left the Army hospital unexpectedly, and except for the stories on the internet, no one knew where he went.

Many people had posted stories about meeting him and how he had helped them, even though they were complete strangers. It seemed that his destiny was to wander from place to place helping those in need.

I thought about the purple thing I saw at the bottom of his box. I concluded that it was a purple heart medal. It must have been given to him for heroism and for being injured in the line of duty.

Just like when I met him, he appeared and then disappeared just as quickly. No one knew where he went until someone else entered a story on his site. I added my story.

At the end of the day, everyone who he helps is very thankful. Then he moves on to another town, only to wake up again, not knowing how he got there or who he is. He wanders from place to place, traveling wherever the wind blows.

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. brisk _____ | a. polite, well mannered |
| 2. jogging _____ | b. light jacket |
| 3. unkempt _____ | c. monthly expenses |
| 4. courteous _____ | d. directly, honestly |
| 5. matter-of-factly _____ | e. running slowly |
| 6. cost of living _____ | f. detected, medical finding |
| 7. laundry _____ | g. faster way to get somewhere |
| 8. windbreaker _____ | h. cool and clean air |
| 9. diagnosed _____ | i. not clean, not brushed |
| 10. shortcut _____ | j. place to clean clothes |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. I was planning to go to the park to jog. | T / F |
| 2. I saw a woman under a tree. | T / F |
| 3. I had an omelet for breakfast. | T / F |
| 4. The man's name was Jonesy Roberts. | T / F |
| 5. I was robbed on my way to the store. | T / F |
| 6. Jonesy knew how to fight. | T / F |
| 7. We watched baseball together. | T / F |
| 8. Jonesy had been in the Army. | T / F |
| 9. Jonesy's family came to get him. | T / F |
| 10. Jonesy was a good man. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Where did I meet Jonesy? _____
 - a) at the park
 - b) at the store
 - c) on the way to work
 - d) under a tree

2. What did I order for Jonesy to eat? _____
 - a) pancakes
 - b) waffles
 - c) omelet and potatoes
 - d) wheat toast

3. What did I give to Jonesy when his clothes were in the laundry? _____
 - a) jacket
 - b) clean clothes
 - c) pair of shoes
 - d) all above

4. What did Jonesy do to the two robbers? _____
 - a) beat them up
 - b) gave them his money
 - c) ran away from them
 - d) killed them

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What did Jonesy have over his shoulder?

2. What did I offer to do for him when I met him?

3. What did I have for breakfast?

4. What was I going to do at the park?

5. What did I loan him when we went to the store?

6. What happened in the forest?

7. How did Jonesy lose his memory?

8. Where did I find out about Jonesy and how he helped people?

9. What was on my bed when Jonesy left my home?

10. Where was Jonesy going after he left?
