

The process of becoming not housed was not an easy one. It took a lot of giving up. I gave up on the systems that I believed in. I cherished the ideal of Democracy just like it was written in the Constitution. I fought for the rights of all workers to be treated fairly and for any individual to be capable to speak freely and without punishment. The belief that citizens could have a car in the garage, maybe even two and a white picket fence was thought to be a reality. I tried to live life as best as I could by loving, caring and sharing. And it seemed the harder I tried the harder it was to obtain what I thought I wanted.

It really doesn't matter what predicaments I had gotten myself into. I was a person striving to do their best in difficult times. The abuses that I saw in government, the workplace, the church drove me absolutely mad or at the very least to the point of not wanting to give another dime of taxes or tithes to any of them. What happened to true leadership? Weren't we all here to do the right thing? Wasn't it about making the world a better place? Were people really that afraid to do what worked or to do something different?

A very sweet woman took me from Lebanon to Plymouth. I was thankful to her for bringing me back to a place that I was told would be safe and help me. I remember her just talking my ear off trying to ease the pain of this transition. As I thought about this latest move I questioned why this should be different than any other move and the woman driving me just incessantly talked. Still for some reason I didn't want to tell her to keep quiet, I thought it might just come off as rude and I didn't want to hurt her blissful spirit. As I reflected on the last few days that had gone by I continued to be frustrated. Were did all those individuals that said they loved me go? How is it that I had to go through this alone. Where was everyone when I needed help?

As we drove down the road, the driver pointed to the sky and gleefully announced the rainbow in the sky. I feigned happiness as best as I could our emotional states were mismatched. And this co-pilot was in no mood to try to gain rapport or even change the differences in the stagnate mood. The joyous woman remarked about how the rainbow symbolized something good, something new was about to happen and of course she imparted how this signified a new beginning.

It felt funny as usually the worn by time passenger was the one telling these kind of stories. And now this weary passenger had heard enough.

Yet, he kept his composure. Agreeing with her message was one thing, putting it into actual use in his daily life, when he had just given away most of what he had, was another. Trying to convince himself that, the things that were lost were only possessions was another. And what had he really lost? They were just things, things that he hoped would make others happy.

Fantastic, now he had hypocrisy to add to the list of emotions that he needed to deal with. It was a simple case of philosophy versus the mind. His beliefs were vying against his feelings and emotions.

All this is just the beginning of the story and so many events took place from the moment that I entered the door to the moment that I left that at times I am a loss to even begin to tell the story in chronological order.

One thing that I do know is that most of the people treated me very well upon becoming a sheltered individual. The participants on the program were very kind to me and soon the staff would get to know me as well. I am thankful for this.

The real problem I had in mind was what good could I do here if any. I had been solution focused for a while; however, at times I saw a lot of things as problems that were in need of fixing instead of allowing things to be what they were. I saw myself needing to be fixed.

My attitude had become one of “We’ll see and who cares.” Most might think that those words exemplified someone with a bad attitude, to me they were quite refreshing, no matter what came my way I would survive, if not this shelter than the next and after all I had survived without money before and without lights and even the absence of a comfortable bed didn’t seem to frighten me. Still on some level the change that I embraced was frightening since it went against the ideals and idealistic concepts that I had been taught all my life. The whole process was mood altering because it was a novel approach for someone wanting to be in control of his own life as much as possible. It might be the reason some people go to horror movies, they want to feel afraid, it offers them some sort of release. I created my own self-imposed stigmas. Not only did I think of the awfulness of not having my own living space but I created beliefs of what others thought of the homeless and how that reflected on me. The mind

has wonderful curative powers it also has the ability to create problems that are present only in the mind and in actuality are no part of the real world.

Yet, even in this dismal mood, even in a space that seemed to want to confine me or eat me up. Angels were to be found.

One day I met a mom and her two kids. The names aren't really that important. At times when mom was busy I became an instant babysitter. Kids I could always get along with but a baby that was different. The crying of a newborn, fragile, precious being, the shrill vocalization that said, "I want mommy and you aren't good enough," sometimes went straight through my heart. Nonetheless, I persisted and baby and I became good friends. My mind continued to wonder if this infant knew who I was.

I guess it really didn't matter. One night while playing with this child something different occurred among all the goofy faces that I made and the strange noises, the little angel decided to give me a surprise. It wasn't the usual faces that the baby made it was in fact a eyes opened wide grin. In my books I considered that a sense of acknowledgement and of communication I thank that baby for giving back in very unique way. It was something so simple; yet, to me it had deep meaning.

Her sister and I got along well. Living alone and being single and having a group of women that are too smart to marry me, I didn't really have a lot of play time with children.

The young modern day Shirley Temple loved to be pushed on the swings. And I became her best buddy as long as I pushed the swings, higher and higher.

At times we went for walks and just had little conversations that seemed to make both of us giggle. And she had this game she played were she pretended she was dead. I assumed the part of the game was to have a Prince rescue the Princess. The awakening took place in many different forms including magical leaves. Sooner or later one might realize the many different paths that lead to awakening.

We built sandcastles with enchanted sand guaranteed to give anyone the best dreams possible. And yes, I even became a certified, professional,

card carrying monster chaser, when one was required. And I got the job done and was congratulated for a mission accomplished. We made sure that acorns falling from the trees were so much more than the horrid things that this little girl imagined they were..

We got along very well and most of the time when I asked for something to be done it was.

In the shelter sometimes things got a bit frustrating. It was similar to the lyrics, "I have got too much time on my hands," the longing and yearning to be beneficial was at times very painful. On a less than busy day time passed very slowly as individuals dwelt on their own life situations.

Anything it seemed would be a welcome relief. One night I noticed that the church I attend was having a retreat. I thought to myself, "A retreat from a retreat." And off I went. The church was clean and filled to capacity and the smell of beeswax was in the air.

During the opening procession, the guest speaker, walked down the side aisle, gesticulating and smiling to the people. His rugged face spoke to me, in that this was an individual who had been through hard times and survived. His traditional Franciscan brown robes flowed as he glided through the center of the church. The seeking entertainment and fulfillment person knew that this priest had something to say. He told a few jokes and preached a sermon as well.

Father Dan Lanahan, also mentioned the book that he was selling. A voice inside me told me to, "Empty your pockets." Boy, sometimes I despised those inner conversations that I had; nonetheless, I listened to the prompting and bought the book and added a decent tip.

My thoughts were mainly focused on how I didn't want to read anymore; since, in my frame of mind few people really listened or cared to take the time to understand the subject matter or challenge their own thoughts.

"Empty your pockets," I repeated back to myself, "after all it is only green paper."

The short, dark brown, hair cropped closely to her head, ruddy complexion woman who was overseeing the books being sold gave me a gigantic hug. Why the segue? You'll see.

One day we were playing and mom asked for her to get ready to go. When I heard mom call I of course I asked that she comply with her mother's wishes. Our angel was having none of it. Of course, children often do things like that but we had such a good track record. Mom called again and still no action. And again, no results. I looked through my thoughts in an attempt to come up with a creative way to get the job done. Often I have found that when the usual doesn't work than try something unusual. So I came up with a plan.

"I'm tired," she intoned drowsily. I agreed.

"I don't want to change."

"Me either," after all it was the truth, I was in my sweatpants and enjoyed being in them, why change to please others, change to please yourself first.

"But you know what happens once you change? You see once you change you turn into a Super Princess, with all sorts of magical powers and you can do the greatest things with ease and you will even feel better and be able to smile now and so many possibilities can come around. And surprises, you like surprises don't you? Too many surprises to mention, you'll see."

Something in that message made her take off like a bolt off lightening. Somehow I believe it is all in the salesmanship and the ability to create unique solutions that are structured to the individual and are not mass produced.

One of our little one's problems was that she could not remember my name. Maybe in a child's mind this was some type of game that was being played that only they knew how it ended or it could have just been forgetfulness.

I worked the late shift and sometimes it felt as if I just had enough energy to get in the door. One of my favorite spots was what I had labeled the neutral zone, it was a spot between the men's side of the shelter and the woman's side. It was a nice place to watch all the action of the day's events unfold. I wasn't feeling my best. Tired of so many things and if we had the time I would mention them.

The next voice I heard was that of the little child,

“You changed into your Super Prince clothes, Paul.”

“Yeah, I did. Thank You.”

It was such a simple thing but it carried at least to me much depth. I was remembered, if only for one brief early morning.

And most of us come up with different reasons and excuses for the things that don't happen in our lives. Really all it takes is showing up as someone else once said with the proper attitude and right ideals. It would be quite surprising to me if that really worked.

So often in life we forget the matters that are most important. Why does the money matter, unless it brings about something good?

One would think that upon someone leaving the shelter, it would be a joyous occasion, from my vantage point and observations that is not always true. Acquaintances and friends have been made even among those who had been your harshest critics, those that had been endeared to you but where not allowed to admit their feelings, feel the tug of heart strings and the artesian wellsprings of the eyes emit their true internal emotional state.

Simply put, it as if one were setting the bird held in a cage with a broken wing free once it had recovered. An attachment has formed, alliances have been created and the cold hard realization, is that one or a group is leaving and that you will be left behind. It really isn't a true story that the mind has told these individuals, for everyone leaves the shelter at some time, sooner or later things change and life offers up its surprises once again, after the winter dormition, the thawing of the cold thoughts transforms us and the resurrection of a new spring of beliefs and actions occurs, all as if the those unpleasant times had never happened. It is during this hardening off period that we learn to lift a heavier burden and grow stronger.

This man had not reached that part of the developmental cycle. It was time for the family mentioned in this story to move on and their actions were hurried as if leaving a house on fire. It was a time for observation and reflection, they were doing their thing and if he could not be strong than the heartbroken individual would just remove himself to the sidelines. How we all try to find the right things to do through constant thinking and searching and now as I reflected on my loss, my frustrations, the fears of what might happen to that family and or myself or so many others, the

tears flowed and any attempt to dam the deluge was unsuccessful. How silly I felt, a grown person weeping.

And then the dreaded internal voice that seemed to make things worse was banging in my head once again, "Read the book," maybe I wanted to sleep this whole thing off like a few bad hangovers, but the last thing that I wanted to do was read; nevertheless, that is what I did.

As I looked for the page I grew frustrated even that small amount of time between thought and actualization. At last I had found the page I was looking for in the book that I purchased a few weeks ago, it read:

"On the street I saw a small girl cold and shivering in a thin dress, with little hope of a decent meal. I became angry and said to God: "Why did you permit this? Why don't you do something about it?" For a while God said nothing. That night he replied, quite suddenly: "I certainly did something about it. I made you."

Life has many coincidences and we never know why things occur in the way they do. The thing to remember is that even during the darkest periods of our lives, even in the worst storm, the sun still shines and rainbows burst through, burst through, the clouds if only we are capable of taking the time raising our heads and witnessing the wonderful things that transpire in our daily lives.