

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss.

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We Met On The Train

I sat on the train, in the LA station, waiting for the for the multitude of passengers to get onboard. Tired from a long week of not solving the problems I'm paid to solve, I looked at the empty seat next to me a wondered who might end up sitting next to me. Being Friday night I knew that someone would end up taking it, its always standing room only.

Just the week before I sat next to two young Asian girls who didn't speak any English except, "We sit here, please?" What could I say when I should have gotten up and offered them my seat? As they squeezed into the seat next to me and third of my seat, I sent a text to Cindy about it, telling her "Don't be Jealous, but I got a seat with two young girls." She replied, "Aww-www."

So I watched the passengers filing on, each looking for a seat, most walking pass me. The thought came to me, which is not a new thought, I should have a sign above the seat that reads, "I'm an author, sit here if you'd like to talk about writing."

As each new person came through the door I mentally ask the question, "Is that the one?" For each one I give myself an answer:

"Not that one, he'll just be on his computer the whole time."

"Nope, she won't speak English."

"I hope not, he's to big to fit into the seat."

Then she came into view. She looked young - maybe collage-aged. She's looked around like she didn't know what to do. She turned and I saw her profile - no she's middle aged, blond shoulder length hair. Tall - maybe six foot. She turned and looked down the length of the car, focusing on the far door.

Next was a young Asian man - definitely in collage - engineering or business. Then an older man - they always have good stories.

"Excuse me, is this seat taken?" It was the blond.

"No, please." I motioned to the seat. She sat, looking straight forward. I studied her face in the couple of seconds before I feel like I need to look somewhere else. Not to much makeup, eyes are nice, good sized nose, not middle aged - 20s, maybe 30. Later I found out she was 19.

We sat in silence as the train filled up. Finally the train started moving, ten or so people standing in the aisle near

us. I made some comment about the train being full and she commented about having been on the train all day and being tired - She was traveling from Oxnard I think.

I think she wanted to stop talking at that point - she looked forward again, but I had three hours to sit on the train so I asked her another question.

"How far you going?"

"Anaheim."

"Going to spend the week-end somewhere or headed home?"

"Headed home, was visiting friends."

"What do you do?"

"I work at a fast food place."

Her voice sounded flat and uninterested - really had the feeling she didn't want to talk - maybe too tired to talk. I should have stopped there, read my book, tried to surf the internet, but something was telling me to continue, that and the internet connection is always so bad on the train so I continued.

"What do you do when you're not working? For fun."

"I use to play volleyball."

"Really! Where."

“High school, and in my first year of collage.”

“That’s cool.”

“Yeah, but my dad made me come home after one year.”

“Oh.”

“Grades... and other stuff.”

“Oh.”

Her voice at this point really said, ‘and that other stuff I don’t want to talk about.’

“What were you studding in school? What to you want to do?”

“Just general stuff. I want to work with kids, a nurse or pediatrician. What do you do?”

“I’m a system engineer. I also do some writing.”

I pulled out one of my cards for Violet Hopes and handed it to her. “This is my newest book.”

She looked at it and read the back.

“I wrote one of the stories. Eighteen other authors each wrote a story. I edited all the stories, laid them out, and published the book.”

She smiled. There was something in her eyes – not sure what. We talked a bit and I made a comment about how being an editor kind of messes up the reading experience, because I can’t just read; I’m always finding mistakes or ways things could have been written better.

She made a comment, something like, “It must be fun to write.” There was something in her voice, not ‘it

must be fun to write’, but ‘I wish I could write.

Instead of asking her about it I talk about my experience, “Yeah, it is fun, but its hard too. Do you know what dyslexia is?”

Her eyes grew wider, she nodes, “yeah, I have dyslexia.”

We spend the next ten minutes talking about how it is hard for me to write, but how I get through it and how it makes me feel. There was a little amazement in her voice, the feeling that maybe she could get past her problems, too. I brought the conversation back to her and asked, “Did you get any help at collage with your dyslexia?”

She said, “No,” and we talked for ten minutes about some of the ways she might get help when she went back. She told me that she was talking online classes to bring her grades up. This time when she talked about school she sounded much more upbeat.

The first call for her stop was announced and we said our good-byes. As we pulled into the station I reached in and pulled out one of my business cards. I told her, “Here’s my e-mail address. I’d like to keep in touch with you. I’d like to help you anyway I can, dealing with your dyslexia.”

It made me feel good, seeing the smile on her face, like maybe she had made the right choice sitting next to the man with the beard.

The next two hours went by slowly, part of it sitting alone, part next to a 20 some-

thing guy listening to his iPhone – me mostly reading a book.

I didn’t think about her again until three days later when I started thinking about how God might be working in our lives. Why did twenty people walk past the empty seat next to me? Why did she sit down next to some old guy? Why did I talk to her when I felt unsure of myself? What kept me from taking her hints and shutting up? What made me say, “yes it’s fun, but...?”

Was I suppose to talk to her about dyslexia? Was I the encouragement she needed? Did I make a difference?

Then I felt like I needed to write down this encounter. I’m not sure why. It doesn’t seem like the kinds of thing anyone else would care about. But then, maybe one of you knows someone who is has dyslexia and sharing this story with them may be an encouragement.

Maybe this will be an encouragement to you to reach out to someone you don’t know and let them know that ‘who they are’ matters to someone else.

Maybe, just maybe, I needed to write it down so I could see what God can do when I let him.

I hope your Thanksgiving and Christmas bring you an opportunity to share in the life of someone new.

Douglas Clarke