

# I Remember

Author: L. Weiss

I remember. I remember as if it were yesterday. I remember.

It was Christmas Eve, and like many other people I was doing my last minute Christmas shopping. As I was walking down the cold, windswept street I heard a croupy cough coming from between a trash can and the corner of a building. As I approached the trash can, I could see an old man dressed in rags trying to keep warm. He wore an old ratty coat, matted with dirt and stuffed with newspapers to help keep him warm. His pants were short, and full of holes. His shoes had fallen apart, with his toes sticking out of the hole in the left one. The blanket that was draped around him was tattered and worn, you could practically see through it.

As I gazed in awe, the old man slowly looked up at me with his pale, dirty face. His eyes were half closed and glazed. His arms crossed his chest as he slowly patted himself, trying to keep warm.

For some reason that I still don't understand today, I reached out my right hand in hopes that he would take it. He looked at me with those glazed eyes, as if to say thank you.

He slowly took hold of my hand, clasping it with his. I could see they were frozen and chapped from the cold, and I could see the outline of the bones and veins that traced it.

I put my left arm around his back for support and slowly helped him to his feet. He was so weak, he had a difficult time standing. I used my body to support him.

Once he was sturdier standing, we started walking, looking for a shelter where he could get some hot food and drink. Maybe some warm clothes and a safe place to sleep.

As we continued walking, I heard his stomach growl from starvation. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed a dinner was still open. As we walked through the dinner doors I saw an open booth where we could sit and rest as we ate and drank.

The waitress, seeing us take a seat, walked over and asked us what we would like. Not knowing what the man liked, I ordered him a bowl of chicken soup to help warm him up inside, along with two cups of hot coffee.

As I sat there sipping my coffee, I couldn't help but wonder how he got to where he was now. Where did he come from? Was he someone's husband? A father? Did any one know who he was? And did anyone even care? Thousands of questions were racing through my head. As I watched him eat, I could see some color returning to his cheeks.

After we had finished our meal and had paid our check, we were back out in the freezing cold, looking for a shelter. We hadn't gone far when the old man spotted a church just up the snow-lined street. I watched him as he struggled up the stairs and went through the large wooden doors.

By the door frame, there was a bowl of holy water which the old man dipped his fingers into and made the sign of the cross, he then bowed in the direction of the altar. Helping him up, we made our way to the pews and took a seat.

The old man knelt down, clasped his hands together, closed his eyes, and proceeded to pray. As he was praying, I looked around to see other people praying too. There were others receiving communion.

Candles were lit and they flickered in the slight breeze that danced playfully around them. The air was filled with the smell of burning incense. And the sounds of the children's choirs soft singing filled the heart with joy, and the soul enlightenment.

This was to remind us that this was a very special day, the eve of all eves. This was a celebration of the birth of baby Jesus.

I looked back over at the old man and saw that he was having a little trouble getting back up, so

leaning over, I wrapped my left arm around his back for support. I took hold of his arm with my free hand and gently helped him up.

As I stared thoughtfully at all the joy and happiness that was filling the people, I felt the old man rest his head on my shoulder. I looked at him and he gave me a smile, as if to say thank you. Then he shut his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

After a few minutes, I noticed that he was no longer breathing. He seemed to be in a very peaceful sleep. No more worries. No more cold, or hunger. No more problems. Just peace.

As I looked at him with his head still resting on my shoulder and a peaceful look on his face, I did not notice the priest walk up and place his hand on my shoulder.

As I looked at the priest with tears running down my face, I realized that the old man was in a much better place. As the priest began giving him his last rights, I realized that I didn't even know his name. When I first met him, I thought I was helping a lost soul. But it was he, who had helped this lost soul. I remember. I remember as if it were yesterday. I remember.

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