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The Traveler

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The Traveler

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay’s first paragraph.

"The traveler moved through the town with one thing on his mind, reaching his destinations. The journey had been long and difficult, and was beginning to take a visible toll on him. Once snug, brown, cotton pants hung far below his waist, held up by suspenders. A stained undershirt draped over his top emphasized the boniness of his shoulders and chest. Dirty blonde hair, knotty and broken at the ends, was pulled into a messy ponytail. His eyes were seas of blue, shadowed by deep, dark bags. An uneven beard covered most of his face, suggesting that he hadn't shaved in months. A frizzy mustache acted as camouflage for the mouth that refused to smile before the end of the journey."

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The traveler moved through the town with one thing on his mind, reaching his destinations. The journey had been long and difficult, and was beginning to take a visible toll on him. Once snug, brown, cotton pants hung far below his waist, held up by suspenders. A stained undershirt draped over his top emphasized the boniness of his shoulders and chest. Dirty blonde hair, knotty and broken at the ends, was pulled into a messy ponytail. His eyes were seas of blue, shadowed by deep, dark bags. An uneven beard covered most of his face, suggesting that he hadn’t shaved in months. A frizzy mustache acted as camouflage for the mouth that refused to smile before the end of the journey.

As the clock struck 10 a.m., the traveler found himself in front of the local elementary school. A kaleidoscope of children colored the playground, twisting and turning every which way. On the jungle gym, a small red headed boy was showing off for the rest of his class. He climbed the metal bars higher and higher until he reached the top. Just as he began to gloat, his blue Mickey Mouse sneaker lost its grip and he slid into the air. The traveler moved instantly, catching the child without a moment to spare. Both students and teachers huddled around him, murmuring, “Where did he come from? How did he do that? Who is he?” A large woman wearing wire rimmed glasses broke through the crowd and grabbed the boy from the traveler’s arms. “Let go of him! Get away from him!” she roared, swinging her golden mane violently. “Come on children, back inside.” The crowd dispersed as the traveler turned, expressionless, and walked away.

By four o’clock, the sun began to retreat and the air grew cooler. The traveler had passed through much of the town and was approaching the city, noticing a change in the people as the scenery became more urban. He was now an invisible ghost rather than a gutter rat. Traffic was
picking up and he stopped at a sign that read “Don’t walk”. Just as a red Honda was about to take the corner, a woman dressed in a snake skin business suit walked right into the street. With only seconds to react, the traveler pulled her from the fireball’s path, landing them both on the pavement.

“What the Hell do you think you’re doing?” hissed the woman as she slid to her feet. “Look what you’ve done,” she said pointing to a tear in her sleeve. “Do you have any idea how much this jacket costs?” She continued screaming as he walked on.

Darkness had taken over the city by ten o’clock. The scum had crept out of their hiding places and not a corner was vacant. People were shouting off in the distance and the sound of gunshots rang out in the air. Up ahead the traveler watched an elderly man stumble down the street with a bag of groceries, limping like a lame dog. Without warning, a young boy appeared and began weaving a web of torment around the man. He circled his prey then pushed him to the ground and began grabbing at his pockets. The traveler raced down the street as fast as he could, reached the young boy and threw him on his back. After a small struggle, the boy rose and ran away, screaming vulgarities behind him. The traveler helped the elderly man to his feet and collected his groceries.

“Thank you, thank you so much!” the elderly man said, reaching for his wallet. “Please, how can I thank you?”

The traveler raised his hand in denial of the money. “Your words are enough,” he assured him. “They are the nicest words I can remember hearing.”

He looked at the elderly man sympathetically and went on his way.

It was close to midnight and the traveler was becoming extremely tired. The air had become chilly and he worried that he would not be warm enough throughout
the night. He turned down an alley and positioned himself between a dumpster and a brick wall. He covered himself with some newspapers and disappeared into a deep sleep.

“Take a look at this, George!” the portly policeman yelled across the parking lot. 
“What is it?” asked his partner. 
“Just a little ray of sunshine to start your morning off right,” Larry answered, stepping out of the way. George cautiously moved to the right and looked into the crevice between the metal and brick. 
“Another worthless piece of trash littering our streets”, he said, looking down at the body. “This guy’s as white as a dove.” 
“Makes you wonder why those people were born in the first place, eh?” Larry said, returning to the car. 
His partner shrugged his shoulders. “Well you gotta say something for the guy, at least he died with a smile on his face.”

--Deanne Monteith