

## Hidden Heroes

The day begins with my mom tugging, pulling at me to get out of bed. I was very much awake, but the comfort of the soft sheets and warmth of the blanket was too satisfying. I wasn't planning on leaving this without a fight.

"Emily, get *up!*" my mom groaned. She tugged at the edges of the blanket, in the hopes that it would come off, and me along with it.

I grumbled. Could there not be one day where I would be able to take rest, just relax? Apparently not. I'm a very busy child.

"Don't forget that you have a science project due tomorrow! You must gather the materials! I thought you and Elisa were going to go around the city today to get whatever you needed. It's already 9:30, Henry! She must be waiting!" Mom questioned. I guess I had no choice, so therefore I got up, and started the daily rituals.

Tomorrow was the day when we turned in our science projects. We have had over two months to work on this project, but as I am an expert procrastinator, I hadn't started until now. My best friend Elisa and I were the worst people in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade when it came to doing work. Our hard work was limited to two hours before going to bed the night before the due date. But this was normal, and my parents were too used to this to make any negative comments.

After I had my breakfast of French toast, my mom dropped me off at Elisa's house. It was a large brown home apart of a normal suburban neighborhood. Except, her house stood out with absurd decorations. They were preparing for Christmas 6 months early, with lights hanging from all ends of the house. It was glowing with all colors of the rainbow. However, the house also gave off Halloween vibes, with pumpkin carvings with candles in them. On the doorstep

were gargoyles, sculptures carved out of concrete. However, no matter how strange it seems, she is still an amazing person with an amazing family.

She came out of her house, wearing her normal clothes. Black tights, a normal T-shirt, and her lucky red cape. She never goes anywhere without it.

I got out of my car and she met me in the bottom of her driveway. "Where should we go first?"

I rubbed my chin. "Well, we should maybe go to the landfill."

"Ew, that yucky place? What are we going to find there?"

I smiled. "Tons of stuff. Whatever people don't want, and a lot of people don't want a lot of things"

She shrugged. "If you say so!" We started walking towards the city.

We walked past streets of the busy city. There was lots of commotion going on. School was just starting up, and parents were everywhere, doing their last minute back-to-school shopping. The streets were buzzing with Sunday morning traffic.

Elisa and I just passed a flower shop. This was one of the most well-known shops in the area. It was run by an elderly lady, who was seen outside the shop every day. She worked non-stop and was always there to help any customer who needed assistance. However, no one really knew her. The shopkeeper always kept to herself and didn't have any friends that would come talk to her while her store was open.

It was an incredibly windy day, so my hair was blowing all over the place. I guess that it was the wrong day to wear my favorite broach. It flew out of my hair, but I didn't notice this at first. So, I continued to walk through the streets as if nothing has happened.

When we reached the cross signal, I chose that moment to casually brush through my hair in the middle of a conversation. That's when I first realized that something was wrong. While Elisa continued to talk about puppies, or something else like that, I was instantly in a state of panic. "WHERE IS MY BROACH?" I screamed.

Elisa flinched. "First, do not shout right in my ear like that again. Second, you lost your broach? How? Where?"

I was beginning to go into an emotional breakdown. "I don't know where I put it, or where it has gone. All I know is that broach is lucky to me, and I can't afford to lose it."

I took a seat on a bench on the side of the sidewalk, Elisa right next to me, attempting to pacify and limit all the emotions going through me right now. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the old lady from the flower shop running towards me with something in her hand. I tried focusing my vision and was shocked once I saw what she was going to bring me. My broach!

She walked up to me, out of breath from running almost 2 blocks. "It blew away in the wind" she said with a smile.

I stood up and gave the woman a hug. "You don't know how much this matters to me!", I said, clutching her hand. I looked over at her shop, seeing a large line of customers. "Why did you leave your shop?" I asked, watching several people leave the line with angry faces.

Her facial expression didn't change. "That's fine. I care about my customers. I don't use them for money. The only reason I sell flowers anyways is to make people happy. A few people can wait, but your broach won't come back" she said, giving the broach back to me.

I smiled wider than I ever had before. This lady cared for me and I barely knew her. She waved bye at me, and I responded the same way. I looked at Elisa who nodded and gestured me to keep walking.

"That lady was so sweet. She gave back my broach, and it didn't even mean anything to her." I told my best friend.

"Some people are just that kind. What would we even do without them?"

I shook my head. "I don't know about that. All I know is that I would not be able to function properly without my broach." We both giggled at how shallow this comment was.

After a few more blocks, Elisa and I stopped at a Starbucks on the streets. The long walk to the landfill was a tiring one, especially in the warmth of early September. I got my usual cold latte, whereas Elisa got a refresher.

While we sipped our drinks while sitting down, I watched as a homeless boy entered the Starbucks. His clothes were rags, dirty and ripped. It looked as if he hadn't eaten for days and was about to collapse in the heat. I brought my hand up to my mouth. It's so hard to realize that not everyone has access to everything that you might have on a regular day basis.

After this happened, the boy walked up to the barista with a sandwich in his hand. He seemed to be pleading with him to allow him to eat this. But the boy had no money. He emptied out his pockets, and nothing was found. After looking around for a little bit, the barista made an

ok sign to the boy. He allowed him to have the sandwich for free! The boy clasped his hand tightly. This probably meant the world to him.

I looked away, trying to process what I just saw. That was really the definition of random acts of kindness. The barista went out of his way to make sure that the boy had food, even though he wasn't allowed to.

Now, that poor boy would have something to fuel his diet for at least the next week. Being homeless isn't easy, but that barista sure made his life a lot easier. After five or so minutes, Elisa and I packed our stuff, and were ready to head out the door. However, I motioned Elisa to wait a little bit. I had to talk to that barista.

The man was writing names on coffee cups, but I had to get his attention somehow. "Good afternoon!" I interrupted his business.

He looked up at me. He was a young man, most likely in his 20s, with brown curly hair that peered out of his Starbucks hat. "Hi there, what can I get for you?"

I pursed my lips. "I actually already bought something, I wanted to ask you a question."

"Go ahead."

"I saw a homeless boy come to the register, and you let him eat a sandwich for free. Why? I promise that I won't get you in trouble or anything, but I'm just curious. Why would you pass up money?"

He chuckled. "What's the point in being apart of a business that doesn't help people? That kid was probably dying out there, and no amount of money is worth that suffering. Giving him that food for free was the least I could've done for him. I hope that answers your question."

I was incredibly impressed with his kindness. "It does, thank you. Have a nice day."

"You too."

And with that, I walked out the door, feeling inspired. The barista didn't care about his job, but his main priority was to help a kid who was struggling. That was something that couldn't possibly be looked down upon.

Elisa noticed how my face had suddenly beamed, with a feeling like pride. "That barista do something good?" she prompted, casually.

I couldn't understand how she didn't notice, but nevertheless I answered the question gladly. "He gave a homeless boy free food. Against his work. How amazing is that?"

"I guess some people are just naturally awesome. Now hurry up before the landfill closes. It's almost 1!" and with that, we ran as hard as we could, until we reached the one and only landfill.

"Hey Tony! How are you today?" I asked the man behind the desk. The man had a messy beard and had dust covering his face. His voice was gruffy, but he was anything but scary. I had known him for almost 7 years now, and he continued to be someone I could depend on.

"Nothing much! Just the usual with work and my kids. Now tell me, what do you need?" Tony answered, coming out of the desk area, towering over me.

"I have a science project, on windmills. Anything you would recommend?"

He rubbed his chin and looked at his junkyard. "Probably some steel rods, with some old records. I'd say that should make a pretty accurate windmill!"

I clapped my hands. "This sounds great! I'll just dig out the materials and then I can head on my way back home with Elisa!" I said pointing to her, and in response, Elisa waved.

Tony waved back, and then focused his attention on me. "Don't worry about it, Emily. I gotcha. I'll bring the materials to your house and then you can work on it! Go on, get on your way back."

I raised my eyebrow. "Tony, it's not your project. It's mine. Also, my house is pretty far. Are you sure you can walk that far with all these materials. No, I'll just take it!"

"Kid, you are one of the best people I've ever met, and so is everyone in your family. Let me just do this one thing! So, get on your way!"

"Are you 100% sure?"

"Yes. Bye."

"Bye."

As Elisa and I walked back home, I tried to understand the past few hours and what has happened. I witnessed incredible kindness today. First, the elderly lady, then the Starbucks barista, and now Tony.

Now, when people say that the president or world leaders are heroes, I disagree. The real heroes are people close by, ones who are kind enough to help everyone around them, no matter how big or small a matter. Those are the people we should look up to.