

The cop and the snow bank...

It was the quietest time in the middle of a night after the bars had closed and before early morning traffic starts. I was walking in Brampton.

It was one of those cold winter nights with no clouds, a light breeze and extremely low temperatures. I have no idea where I had been but I do know that I hadn't slept in a couple of days and I had been drinking and using various drugs for at least two, maybe three or more days. I was very high, very drunk and extremely tired. I had no money and nothing positive on the go. I was utterly homeless, with not even couches to surf upon anymore. Of the various ways to die generally I would obsess on painless so either instant or drugged and I was also extremely concerned that my body not be found – I have no ideas why this obsessed me so much – I do not remember any rationale then and can't think of why now but I was so tired from walking and walking and the various effects of homelessness and it was so cold – I was so cold and so utterly fucking lonely – I knew in my head that I had heard that freezing to death was relatively pleasant – it's just like going to sleep. In Brampton at the time there was a parking lot behind the buildings of the four corners, we called it the Queen Square parking lot. It was bound on the north by a large railway embankment that rose about thirty feet in the air. The snow from the area was pushed up against the embankment. Between the piled snow and the embankment is where I thought it would be a great place to lay down, give up, and die. And so I did, I laid down.

“Hey how’s it going down there pal?”

I heard this voice in the distance. And for a moment did not even have the wherewithal to be confused. The voice just hung there. It came again,

“Hey pal, how’s it going down there?”

This time I could identify the individual’s voice and think about it. It was gentle. He was not young. And then I felt myself snapping back into my body – it felt like I had been spread out over a billion small points in the distance and snapped back into this singular point in my body and awareness. I have to imagine that I breathed or moaned or groaned because the fellow with the voice shifted and said something else. I started to become aware of my body all of a sudden. I was not aware of the cold but of the general pain in my body and my burning face though it was not horrible yet. I became aware slowly of my body and the pain. The guy with the voice was talking to me gently and though event he next day I had no recollection of what he said, the tone stayed with me. It willed me back. Eventually I opened my eyes and was shocked to see the entire parking lot behind a pair of black, shiny boots. I could see the mans legs and down each side a black flashlight and a baton squatting down on his heels to talk to me – and behind him was the entire parking lot and I thought – SHIT – I lay down on the wrong side of the snow bank and I thought What a Fucking loser – I can’t even die properly.

Being back in my body I was cold in a way that is not describable. My very soul was aching and inside I was screaming with pain.

As I started to shift and move my legs boots, baton and flashlight and voice stood up and moved back about 5 feet and squatted back down. He gave me space. He kept talking in that gentle tone. Eventually he asked me pointed questions and then he asked me if I had a place to go. I told him I did – and he said ‘can you get there’ and I said ‘yes’

My destination was a rooming house where I had used to live and I knew how to break in quietly and would find an empty room – but I didn’t tell him that. He stood up and then moved off again another 5 or 10 feet and just stood there. Eventually I got up and started to walk in the direction of the rooming house. It was then – that I saw the second police officer standing about 20 feet away. My guy, I know said something gentle, like ‘take care’ or the like. As I was walking away I heard the younger officer challenge the older officer about his choices. The younger fellow was saying ‘he’s just a drunk, what’s the matter with you, this is a waste of time’ and then I heard the older officer use a very stern voice, strong language and tear a strip off that little fuck and talk to him about compassion. And his voice faded as I walked away.

This memory stands out in a winter with no other memories that I could discern and be sure were actually the same winter. In early recovery I scratched around those

ideas for memories and maybe a timeline and there are a few memories that blur,
but I have none of that winter.

I've often thought about trying to find that fellow, because he saved my life. And I
love my life.