

Joaquin

Another day, another new set of foster parents. Joaquin was being driven to his new home, new family, once again. He already knew how he'd end up, just at the corner with another trash bag, so he thought. The social workers driving him to his new home never seemed any different, because he knew he'd just see another in a short amount of time. This feeling would never get old. The slight hint of excitement, and the dull realization that he knows how this will turn out. The dull feeling often overpowering the excitement, though he remained optimistic for the time being. What number was this? He lost count, possibly seventeen. It had been so long since his first foster parents, and this set probably wasn't anything special. Probably. But there was always something keeping him from completely giving up, and not caring anymore, although he was close to it.

Mark and Linda, their names sounded bland. Almost as if he'd heard these two names together, many times before. The thought that these could be the ones that finally adopted him didn't even cross his mind. That thing, the whole point of doing this, to get Joaquin adopted, felt like it wasn't even an option for him.

"Warm enough back there?", the social worker asked. Joaquin nodded his head and then went back to looking out the window. He never knew how it would feel like to have your own dad take you on a trip. He had been on road trips with foster parents, but they always went wrong, and even though he didn't know it was true, he felt as though he always screwed it up himself.

As a kid, this was something that he always knew he struggled with, but never realized what he did wrong until it was too late. Now looking back, all he wanted to do was try to make others see what he was seeing. How he was feeling. As this is all going on, Joaquin did not want to give up. And a perfect reminder of this was his ribbon. Sitting in his bag was an old blue ribbon from a piece of art he did when in elementary school. He used this as a reminder to himself that no matter what happened, no matter how bad he felt about himself, he always knew that he is appreciated somewhere.

And through all these years, this stuck with him.

"I think you're going to like your foster parents", said the social worker. "Oh yeah?" "And why's that?", responded Joaquin. "Because they really want a child just like you". Oh wow, like Joaquin hadn't heard this one hundred times again and again. "Maybe, I guess", said Joaquin. "Cheer up, bud." "I know it's been hard, but we've worked very hard to get you to someone who needs you", said the social worker.

Joaquin didn't want to talk now. Or ever. Especially to the social workers because like the foster parents, he'd lose them in even a shorter period of time. But he was persistent in getting an answer out of Joaquin.

When Joaquin didn't answer, he said "Don't you wanna know my name?" "I mean, I'm driving you somewhere where you might spend the rest of your life and you don't want to talk at all?" "Yeah, I guess." "What's your name?" "Steve", he replied. "Yeah, I know." "Pretty boring name, unlike yours, Joaquin."

"Man, what I would give for an interesting name like that"

“Yeah. I don’t know, a lot of people miss-pronounce it, It gets old.”, Joaquin said. “Also, just like the pronunciation, spelling the name is even worse.”

“All I’m saying is”, Steve said, “is that Steve, in my eyes, is even worse.” Now how could that possibly be true, Joaquin thought. “Think about it, I learned my name and since then, I haven’t ever had to think about it.” “No one ever mispronounces it or spells it wrong, and that to me is boring.” “That’s just another amount of boring in my life, at least your name has people interested, instead of bored.”

This was something Joaquin hadn’t thought about ever. He never expected someone to be interested in his name, let alone him. I mean, look at his life, never kept by a single person for too much time, and now someone tells him he’d rather have his name than Steve?

“And in another way”, Steve continued, “This kinda connects to your life.”

“How?”, Joaquin responded.

“Well, think about it.” “I have a set life and career, and that’s good and all, but sometimes I wonder what’d it be like to be someone like you.” “Someone like me?” Joaquin was even more surprised. “Yeah, you’re young, still looking for a place to live, a place to work, still have the chance to pursue any kind of career that you want”, said Steve. “Now I know you might not really care about what I’m saying right now, but hear me out: I know you’re tired, and think you should just go with the flow, and just expect the worse, but you have your entire life to be like that.”

“Wow”, said Joaquin. “Thanks for that” They sat in silence for the remainder of the remainder of the ride. But only because of how good Joaquin felt inside. He had barley sensed the feeling that we actually mattered, and that someone actually say him for who he really was. Although this surprised him, he did feel very relieved to finally get some emotions off his chest, and to calm him down. He tried to hide the excitement, the cool feeling that he knows all too well. He was soon going to meet his new “parents”, and he was now optimistic.

The car only stopped once more, at a fast food restaurant. Steve leaned over his seat to look back at Joaquin, who had just nodded off.

“Wake up, we’re at McDonalds”

“Oh thanks”, Joaquin muffles. “I’m starting to get a little hungry I could use a burger.”

“Have you given any more thought to my little speech back there?”

“Yep”, Joaquin responded. “I guess it’s good to know that someone else can see my life through my eyes.”

“Well, that is my job. I know it seems like I’m just some gut transporting you from one house to another, but I study you.” “It’s my problem if you or your parents aren’t a fit, so I am held accountable for you.”

“Wow, I never I looked at it that way, I guess you sorta have to know me.”

“It’s true, I know, I have a heart!”

“Yeah I know, but sometimes I just feel like everyone in my life doesn’t truly know me right now.” “But I guess I overshot my assumptions.” Joaquin said.

“Yes well, I don’t blame you, this can be hardening on a person, being thrown around, from household to household.” “I think you deserve better, I truly do.”

And so Joaquin walked into McDonalds with his newfound confidence in life, and the image of him opening up and finally finding a home in the new future. He didn’t feel all too well,

but this was definitely an upgrade from his previous thoughts. They picked up their food and they were off.