

Cold, desperate, hunger, pain.

These are the words that screamed at me as I looked into his eyes. They shone like green emeralds, glistening in the dim light of winter. They were the eyes of a homeless man. People walked past him as if he was invisible, a non-existent shadow.

His clothes were grubby and wet. His muddy hands shook, as his thin fingers gripped a McDonald's cup. 7 copper pennies lay at the bottom. They clinked together as his hands trembled.

My Mother had always told me that they were just beggars, lazy people, unable to find work.

'Never talk to them, sweetie, 'she'd tell me. 'Ever.' But what was so wrong with them? I'd always wondered, but never dared to ask her.

This man didn't beg though, he didn't look dangerous, or even nasty for that fact. As I looked at him, I saw something else. His eyes were bright, it was obvious that he hoped, pleaded, for me to spare a few coins - anything. A wave of guilt washed over me.

I couldn't stop myself. My body seemed to take more control than my brain. My legs self-consciously walked themselves to where he sat. I crouched down beside him, he looked up at me, and as I slid a £10 note into his dirty cup, he smiled. Such a smile that could melt a thousand hearts.

'Thank you.' He whispered, his voice quiet and husky. I smiled back, and got up to walk away. But how could I leave? Knowing that he would have more sleepless nights, more hunger – more suffering.

I bit my lip and looked down at him.

'Can I buy you something to eat, s...s...sir?' I stuttered.

He smiled that dazzling grin again. And, once more, it melted my heart, maybe my soul as well.

'You've already gave me an extremely generous amount miss, I simply cannot accept anymore.' He answered, with impressive English. I was shocked. These were the horrid people my Mother had so deeply described to me? Well, it was clear - she was wrong.

'Oh, ok.' I mumbled. I turned away, and hurried off as fast as I could...

I wish I'd stopped, insisted that I buy him at least a hot drink. But, I didn't. I treated him like an inhuman being – and felt terrible about it. So later that day, I went online to see if I could find any volunteering for the homeless in Newcastle. 'Peoples kitchen.' Appeared on the screen. I clicked on it and found out it was a charity project that provided homeless people with hot food and clothes in Newcastle and across the UK. Therefore, the next day, I found the address and talked to some people that worked there. They were delighted I was so keen to volunteer.

Now, 5 years later, I run the kitchen. I'm so proud of how far we've come!

But the other day, a man walked in. He wore a smart tie and suit -and didn't look like our normal customer.

'Hello! How can I...' then I seen them. His emerald green eyes. In his hand, there was a tattered £10 note.

'I believe this is yours?' he whispered.