

## Change for a Dollar

*Make yourself a blessing to someone. Your kind smile or pat on the back just might pull someone back from the edge.*

Carmelia Elliot

All he wanted was some juice. As tables full of high school students sat in Cafeteria B2 on that cloudy afternoon, he was thirsty. We sat near yet away from him, fixing our hair and worrying about the test next period we hadn't studied for. He was far away from our world, yet forced to be a part of it.

He stood at the drink machine with purpose, fumbling through his fake leather wallet for some change. He came up with a wrinkled dollar bill, and nervously glanced back at his table where other students in his special needs class were sitting. With the coordination of a six-year-old, he tried to make the machine accept his money. After a few unsuccessful attempts, the snickers and comments began. People were laughing. Some were even throwing things at him. He began to quiver, and his eyes misted with tears. I saw him turn to sit down, defeated. But for some

reason, he decided against it. He wasn't leaving until he got a drink.

With a determined expression, he continued, to aimlessly thrust the dollar bill in the machine. Then something terrific happened. A popular senior rose from her seat, and with a look of genuine compassion, went over to the boy. She explained how the machine had a hard time accepting dollars, then gave him some change and showed him where to place it. The boy gave her his dollar and chose a flavor of fruit juice. Then the two walked off in different directions.

Although it was clear that they were from very different worlds, for one moment, they'd shared a real understanding. As I walked away from my lunch table that day, I looked at the boy. I remember thinking how he and the dollar were very much alike. They both weren't accepted where the world said they were supposed to be. But just as the dollar had found a place in a caring girl's pocket, I was sure the boy would eventually find his, too.

Bonnie Maloney

## McDonald's

Most of my friends are what society would call "punks." We are the teenagers who hang out at the coffee shops or the movies for lack of anything better to do. But being punks doesn't mean much.

One evening, after a day of not doing much, we were sitting in McDonald's when a guy in our group whom I had just met that day walked in. Brian was the typical punk teenager, dressed in black with the dyed hair. Right before he stepped inside, he yelled something outside to a man walking down the street. I just hoped he wasn't trying to start trouble. He sat down and a minute later, a burly homeless man stuck his head in and looked at Brian.

"Did you say something to me?" the man demanded, and I thought I saw a mean glint in his eyes. I shrank back, thinking that if Brian had tried to pick a fight, this was the wrong guy to do it with. I had seen too many people and places kick teenagers like us out for pulling stuff.

While the rest of us were looking for a place to back into, Brian got up and walked up to him. "Yeah . . . would you like something to eat?"

The relief was almost audible, and the man smiled and walked in.

After a large meal of hamburgers, fries and dessert, the man left, and even the staff waved good-bye to him. When we asked Brian about it, he explained how he had money that he didn't need and the man had none, so it was only right.

Shelly Miller

## Tomorrow Came Again

My sister was twelve. My parents were separated. As for myself, I was eight. I really did not have a clue what my family was going through until that horrible, cold January night. How could I have had a clue? I mean, I was only eight years old. All I cared about was my afterschool snack, the cartoons on television and trying to stay up later than eight-thirty on school nights.

I remember that night like it was only milliseconds ago. My mother had asked me to carry the towels upstairs to the linen closet. After I moaned, groaned and procrastinated for about ten minutes, I finally agreed. I remember trying to peer over the tower of towels to make my way up the steep stairs safely. When I got to the closet, which just happens to be next to my sister's room, I heard her crying. Being the most concerned third-grader I could be, I opened the door a little bit wider, and I asked, "Shelley, what's wrong?"

She just looked at my confused expression, and then asked me to give her a hug. I was pretty much into the charade of showing that you hated your siblings, so I refused her request. She persisted and asked me once

more. My shaky response was, "Why?"

Shelley explained to me that she had just swallowed an entire bottle of over-the-counter pills. I was, not exactly sure at that point in time if this was a dangerous move on her part. But, I realized it must have been pretty serious. I ran down the stairs to my mother, crying the whole way. I told her exactly, word for word, what Shelley had just explained to me.

My mother raced up the stairs, two at a time. She burst into my sister's room, and she begged Shelley to get out of bed to tell her what happened. Shelley refused to tell my mother anything. My mother forced her out of bed, told her to get dressed, and they hurried to the hospital. My neighbor came over, and I cried myself to sleep. All I remember after that is waking up, and my neighbor was still there.

I later learned that Shelley was going to be all right, after she had gotten her stomach pumped. And especially after she had spent three months of her seventh-grade year in a rehabilitation center for adolescents. I never knew exactly why she had attempted suicide, and I never want to ask her. But what I do know is that life is our most precious gift, and I will never again pretend that I do not love my sister.

*Ashley Hiser*

## Visionary

When I was fifteen, I stood in front of my English class and read an essay I had written. I talked about how excited all my friends were to be taking driver's education and getting driver's licenses. I was jealous. I knew that I'd always be walking everywhere I went or else dependent on others to drive me. I am legally blind.

Since I was four years old, I have had a condition called dry-eye syndrome. While I do have some sight, I never know when I wake up in the morning exactly how much vision I will have that day. The reason for this is that my eyes do not produce enough tears to lubricate my corneas. As a result, my corneas are scarred. Glasses cannot help me.

There are many things I cannot do. I can't drive, read the blackboard in school or read a book comfortably. But there are far more things I can do.

In high school, I played varsity basketball. My teammates gave me oral signals and I learned to gauge where the ball was by the sound of their voices. As a result, I learned to focus extremely well. I earned the sportsmanship award my senior year.

In addition to basketball, I was a representative to the student council. I also participated in a Model United Nations program, traveling to Washington, D.C., with my class to see our legislators in action. I graduated from high school with a dual curriculum in Jewish and general studies.

After graduation, I studied in Israel for two years. Today, I am a sophomore at Yeshiva University. I plan to go to law school and maybe rabbinical school.

Do I wish I could see like other people? Of course. But being blind hasn't limited me in any of the ways I consider really important. I'm still me. If I've had to be more dependent on my friends, at least I've learned who my friends really are.

Because I've had to struggle to find ways to learn that didn't include sight, I've made superior use of my other senses.

I don't know why God chose to give me only a little vision. Maybe he did it so that I would appreciate what I do have even more. Maybe he did it so that I would have to develop my other capabilities and talents to compensate. Or maybe he gave me this special "gift" because I am, in every other respect, so normal that he wanted to push me to excel. It worked.

There are many different ways to look at life. This is how I see it.

*Jason Leib*