

## The Imaginary Boy

### Bus Story no.10

These days I walk with a cane. Not always but more often than I'd like to. It's a collapsable cane that I keep in the deep pockets of my jacket. I like to wear big, oversized jackets. I wear oversized everything. I often feel like the world is too big.

Too oversized. So, this is how I wear my clothing.

Seated at the depot, waiting for my bus, whilst wearing my oversized jacket, I look around, as I do. Creating imaginary stories in my head about the people buzzing around me. I am not so comfortable around so many people, so I find comfort in my oversized jacket. It makes me feel more confident in a world that often overwhelms me.

"Is it due? Did I just miss it? I knew that I shouldn't have nipped into the shop" says a boy as he sits down next to me. We both smile.

I tell him we both missed the bus. He, because he nipped into the shop and I just because. (I walk with a cane, that is neatly folded and concealed in my oversized pocket). We now have a 40-minute wait till the next bus arrives.

And so, we chat.

With my oversized clothing (mostly in black), I am like a human magnet. Strangers engage with me and/or share their story. They share their past, present, their future hopes and dreams and sometimes, their problems. I listen to their stories with empathy, encouragement and often a compliment. These are my bus stories. My journeys into the rabbit holes of other people's lives.

Not knowing that I have difficulty walking (as my cane is folded, hidden into my pocket), the boy (who is actually almost 20) introduces his self.

"My name is Reece. I work for a balloon company where we blow up balloons and transport them to different events and for different occasions".

To which I tell him what an amazing job. Happiness delivered by balloon. He tells me that he is the only young man (boy) that works on his team. His co-workers are older women. They all support him as if he has many mothers. Even better I tell him. He shares that he only works several days a week as his passion is for hiking in the country and climbing mountains. He then shares that as a child he was diagnosed with severe problems with his hips. He had many operations that enable him to walk today. But in constant pain. He knows that he will have several more operations of similar type and effect throughout his life. He was told that as he gets older, he will suffer from painful arthritis in his hips. As I do now, thus my cane.

He tells me that the thought of the future will not hold him back. He will continue to hike and climb mountains even if it hurts. He said he is fine with that. At this moment in his life, being free is what matters. "I will never give up".

Our bus arrives. I pull my cane from my deep pockets with a click clack as it opens into a useful strong, straight line. "Bet you never guessed that" I said laughingly. (When I walk with a cane I laugh.) He smiles as he waits for me to get on the bus before him. We sit close to each other. Close enough to continue our chat. I tell him how happy I am to have met him. What a great inspiration he is to me. I am smiling so big as is he. I know that if he can feel that freedom, embrace his situation and not let it hold him back, then so can I.

I must try harder despite some painful days. I need a cane but don't use it as often. I will use my freedom.

I get off at my bus stop and we both wave goodbye. I hoped to see him again at the bus depot, waiting for the bus. But I didn't. I looked for him every day. Did I imagine him? Was I talking to myself and waving goodbye to an imaginary boy?

I arrive home, fold my cane, pour myself a glass of wine and laugh out loud. So, what if he was an imaginary boy. I am fine with that. On my journey home I discovered even more happiness, inspiration and freedom.

My name is Heidi. Meaning girl from the mountains. I don't like heights; I sometimes walk with a cane but there are other mountains in life that I can still climb.

With my imaginary boy in my mind.

Update: Several weeks later I saw Reece at the bus depot. He smiled and waved at me. I smiled and waved back. Or did I imagine him again? I am fine with that.

Sometime imagination is better than reality. Imagine often.

Stay Kurious always.