

This is a sample of work done for a client that submitted a short story for a writing competition. I removed the author's name and the title of the piece due to of copyright laws. This should allow you to see a before and after look. The 'Track Changes' on MS Word is on so you can see what I've done to modify the material.

**Note:** I do not own the rights to this work, and the content may have been modified over time.

**Before:**

It was a year and a half into our marriage when the strangeness began. Not the kind of strangeness that would divide us but the kind that would reveal how our marriage would evolve. When I write "strangeness" it is because I don't know what to call it. I am sure there is a more accurate word in the metaphysical realm. Maybe its synchronicity or kismet or maybe it's just coincidental. This strangeness that I'm referring to is actually a chain of events that occurred in a short period of time.

Prior to our marriage, my wife, Linda had a job in public safety. She'd been a medic on an ambulance for ten years and two as a 911 dispatcher. Along with those jobs she was a men's fashion sales rep, a zoo worker and waitress. Working in the public was the common thread between all of them.

As a teenager I had worked in retail and an amusement park as my only job were I dealt with the public. I worked in the insulated worlds of factories, labs, offices and cubicles always working with the same people day in and day out. She being an extrovert, me being an introvert, complete opposites that found each other in a floating sea of wandering souls.

Another trait I loved about my wife when I was courting her was her compassion for people and animals. She had amazing patience with individuals I couldn't understand. I could easily blow off a person without regard to their situation. I didn't

want to be bothered with others problems when I had to deal with my own. I always thought that you should take care of your issues, by yourself, without burdening others.

Early into our marriage she stated numerous times she thought we should get a puppy. I resisted because I didn't want the responsibility and addition to not wanting a dog sleeping on our bed. I know how dogs are when they discover that they can lie on your mattress. She eventually broke me down, so I surprised her when I brought home a yellow Labrador puppy. It was the same puppy she'd gone to see at a breeders house a week before. I brought home the big lovable lug of a dog that had more spunk and energy than I anticipated. She apparently liked her, the friskiest dog in the litter that begged to be picked up who was vocal with a vociferous bark. Clearly the Alpha of the pack.

We soon found out that a simple walk in the neighborhood wasn't enough exercise for puppy Riley to calm her down. In addition, I would have to play tug of war for a half hour just to get her tired so she would stop demanding our attention all night. We soon found ourselves hauling her to the park every day to throw endless balls and frisbees.

On one such occasion we drove to a different park than our usual choice. We came upon a vehicle flashing taillights in the middle of the road right in front of the dog park. We pulled alongside the massive SUV then peered into the window. The blacked-out window rolled down and the face of a thirtyish blonde women with a cell phone pressed to her ear. She put it down and let us know of the fact that she was out of gas.

My wife was quick to offer my services. I looked at this urban assault vehicle and wondered if I should try to push it to the gas station a block away.

## After:

It was a year and a half into our marriage when the strangeness began. Nothing that would divide us, but the kind that would reveal how our bond would evolve. When I write "strangeness" it's because I don't know what to call it. I'm sure there is a more accurate word in the metaphysical realm. Maybe it's synchronicity or kismet, or maybe it's just coincidental. This strangeness that I'm referring to is actually a chain of events that occurred in a short period of time.

Prior to our marriage, my wife, Linda had a job in public safety. She'd been a medic on an ambulance for ten years, and two as a 911 dispatcher. She's also been a men's fashion sales representative, a zoo worker and a waitress. She'd always worked with the public is some form or another.

As a teenager, the only jobs were I had to deal with the public were in retail and at an amusement park. Later in life, I worked in the insulated worlds of factories, labs, offices and cubicles, working with the same people day in and day out. My wife's an extrovert, but I'm an introvert. We're complete opposites that found each other in a floating sea of wandering souls. Guess opposites do attract.

Another trait that I love about my wife is her compassion for people and animals. She has s amazing patience with individuals - so much that I could never truly understand. I could easily blow off a person without any regard to their situation. I don't want to be bothered with others problems when I have to deal with my own. I always thought that you should take care of your issues by yourself without burdening others.

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The Hummer was blocking half of the road and there was nowhere to put it the side. I started pushing it down the street while our driver stayed on the phone. Moving three tons down the road with just me pushing was going to take a lot of patience and whatever strength I had in reserves. My wife parked our truck down the street and brought Riley to the dog park.

My head was buried into my chest as I tried my damndest to keep the forward momentum. I felt a surge of power move the beast ahead then I looked to my left to see another man helping me. We were now moving at ten feet per minute with at least forty yards to 40 yards from the gas station.

I looked over my shoulder to the park and saw Linda standing over a limp body lying on the ground. She bent down to talk to this man and tend to his needs. I told my pushing buddy to glance over at what happened. We both stopped pushing. He began to leave me, when I squawked, "Where are you going, we're so close?"

He peered back and just exclaimed, "I'm a cop."

The woman in the Hummer stuck her head out the window and asked what was going on. I pointed to the man on the ground and she proceeded to whip out her phone and dial 911. I asked if she could help me push the remaining distance. When the young blonde stepped out of the hummer an alarm must have been sounded for all good men to come to her rescue. Sure enough, two young guys out of nowhere helped us push. I looked back to see what was happening at the park. The body was still sprawled on the ground with the off-duty officer bent down over him with his hand underneath the victims head.

Meanwhile, the two other men and I pushed the Hummer into the gas station<sup>[Office1]</sup>. Like a flash I ran over to the other crisis. I laughed to myself about this being one of the weirdest things I have been a part of. When I got to the park, the cop told me to go get some candy and orange juice at the gas station. I wasn't understanding.

Candy...orange juice? I was befuddled.

"He's diabetic and in shock. He needs some sugar."

All I could say, was, "Oh...oh okay."

I was back to running like I was some kind of crime fighter. I went to the little store at the station and scoured through the candy display then settled on "Lifesavers" which made sense to me and also grabbed a couple of Hershey bars along with bottle of orange juice. Unfortunately, there were two people ahead me.

I blurted out, "Hey, we have a guy in diabetic shock across the street."

The old man in front of me looked confused but the lady behind the counter told me to run and worry about paying later. I couldn't help but think this the first time I didn't feel ripped off at that high-priced station. I was off and running again, that's three sprints in five minutes, the most I had ran since high school.

I gave the items to the cop who now had the guy sitting on the park bench. The cop and Linda tried to console the man. He looked calm but in a daze. I could hear the siren already coming up the street. That sure didn't take long. Must have caught the crew between heart attacks and car accidents.

The paramedics pulled up and jumped the curb. The two medics got out only to be immediately downloaded regarding medical condition of the victim and that everything was under control. The medic team smiled but they wanted to make it known

that they were on the clock and they were now taking over. We all stood back and let them do their thing which was basically the same thing the cop and my wife did. They assessed and decided to give him a glucose stick instead of the candy I bought<sup>[Office2]</sup>. I felt fairly certain that a pineapple lifesaver could have snapped that guy out his catatonic like state, but it didn't happen.

The man finally came around and babbled about being okay. He tried to reason with us that he just wanted to get some shut eye. He ended up refusing to be exported to the hospital. Apparently, a warm bed and meal didn't appeal to him, so the paramedics spent another ten minutes with him before they left for another emergency. The cop, a young fellow and heavily biceped was pumped with pride now that he was able use his public safety skills.

We ended up talking to the man on the bench. His name was William, but everybody called him Willy. He lived in a group home of sort, what that really meant was that he doesn't have a lot of ways and means. My wife told me to give him some money. I was reluctant because all I had was my poker winnings from the night before, a whopping eighteen dollars.

She gave me a look that said, "Hey! don't be a cheapskate, fork it over."

I gave the whole bounty of winnings to Willy and off we went. Linda, Riley and I got back in the truck and headed home. I reached over to high five my wife because I felt I was part of the solutions in both cases. My wife was used to this kind of action, but it was foreign to me and I felt a little heroic. Who doesn't want to be a Super Hero?

My wife shrugged off the incident as another day in our life. When it happened again a month later in a bar, I began to think here we go again. On this particular

evening, Linda and I were out for some happy hour endeavors along with her sister who is a nurse. The time to react presented itself when I saw a man who sat with another fellow collapse onto the dance floor. The victim's friend was immediately on the ground alongside him while trying to figure out what to do. Others gathered around to see if they could just do anything, something.

The sisters looked at each other and without saying a word, but with a nod the two of them got out of their bar stools and went to tend to matters. They wiggled their way through the small crowd and bent down to access the situation. I threw back one more gulp of beer and went over to join them. I looked over the tops of people's heads and could see that they were down on the floor with the guy. Linda put a wadded-up coat underneath his head while her sister Christina knelt beside him with her hand on his shoulder. She was looking at her watch as though she was timing his actions.

I asked if anybody called an ambulance to make myself useful now that I was now part of the rescue team. I heard that he was having an epileptic seizure but that was only something told to me from another bystander. I've never seen anybody have a disorder like this where they seemed to be in a zombie like state and then begin shaking with stiffened muscles. The sister tandem kept the man on the floor in the same position not to be moved and excited.

The paramedics who were called by the barkeep [Office3] arrived ten minutes later to find the victim coming out of the grips of the epileptic state. He was now sitting up and seemed more embarrassed than ill. Linda and Christina moved away to let the paramedics do their job.



We resumed drinking our cocktails, but I was more animated about what just transpired than the two of them. It appeared it was just another day at the office for them. Again, these are the sort of things that just never use to happen to me but appeared this was the tip of the iceberg for this kind human interaction in my new life.

The next chapter of "*Johnny on the spot*" happened when we were at an outdoor shopping mall. My wife loves gems so I found myself being dragged into a jewelry store. As we looked at new pieces for her upcoming birthday, I began thinking about how much this was going to impact my wallet. Maybe I should have been thankful she wasn't into big homes, luxury cars and Nordstrom's.

Now we had the saleswomen presenting gems and telling how lovely they looked on Linda's finger. I break up the spell that this saleswoman was conjuring, I casually turned to look outside. My eyes caught the sight of an elderly women who tripped and fell face first onto the concrete. It looked like a painful spill. The younger women she was with bent down with a terrified look on her face.

I responded, "Oh no, that lady is hurt."

I swiftly turned to get to the exit before Linda caught wind of what happened. I was first on the scene followed by Linda who bolted by me to the victim still lying on the concrete.

The woman on the ground was well into her eighties and was bleeding from her nose. When the daughter tried to pull her up, she whimpered in pain and began crying. Linda directed me to get her purse and pull out her tissues. I was errand boy again, but I was focused and ready to get this situation under control. A group of ten or so people gathered around us to lend their support or maybe they were in shock like I used to be. It is unsettling to see people bleeding and crumpled over and crying in pain.

The old lady had just simply fallen from old wobbly legs. When I saw her collapse, I had immediately felt the need to respond without apprehension. Maybe a year ago I would have watched others tend to the matter while I went about my business. In this situation I was helping the women wipe the blood from her arms, hands and face.

We spent twenty minutes with her while the daughter drove their car close enough to load her in. The woman appeared not to have any broken bones but was sore, possibly having a sprained ankle. Linda and I went about our shopping but this time I felt different. I had a valiant feeling that gave me a lift. I understood my wife a little more and why she had this instinct. She was a public servant for so long not for big paychecks but for it gave her life meaning[Office4].

Perhaps this new outlook to be a first responder would carry on for the rest of my life. Oddly a month later, while attending a Mother's Day brunch, it happened again. I was the lone person walking around a self-service buffet table in a restaurant when a worker came over to change out the empty pans. The hot dishes were kept warm with cans of sterno. Sterno is a small can containing a wax-like flammable material that when ignited supplies enough heat to keep food warm by being placed underneath the pan.

The worker mishandled a pan and the whole sterno setup crashed to the ground. The sterno spilled onto the floor and began burning the carpet. The workers' first reaction was to try and stamp out the flame. Instead of extinguishing the flame his pants caught fire. [Office5]

Without any second thought I grabbed a tablecloth on an empty table next to the buffet. I smothered the flame on his legs and then grabbed his towel and beat the sterno burning on the carpet to death before it could really do a lot of damage. This scary little scene all played out in less than a minute and not everybody saw it. Those who did clapped while I checked on the worker to make sure he was okay.

He was flustered but unhurt, so I went about getting more eggs and bacon. This time I didn't get that euphoria of being heroic but felt more like I did what anybody could have done. I didn't want to make a big deal about it and besides the worker was already embarrassed by letting that happen. The restaurant insisted in giving me a free meal, but I refused and didn't feel it was necessary. I found out later the restaurant gave our whole party a significant discount.

The moral of this tale is not a karma thing, or a good deed should get rewarded story but more about being a decent human being. Helping others when they need assistance is sadly not something you are taught in a school curriculum but is something you learn at home and eventually on your own. In my case I had a great mentor who doesn't think twice when people and animals are in distress.

Now years later after those series of incidents transpired, I have found myself on the lookout for situations that can go bad. If I see another person about ready to drop their load of groceries or lumber<sup>[Office6]</sup>, I react to help instead of turning away. I carry first-aid bags in all our vehicles and feel ready for duty when needed. If I never have to jump in and help another person in distress again then so be it. I had learned my lesson years ago and only hope that others like myself get awakened to the call for action when it really matters.

