

## 15. Diego R.

### Pockets

It was Jacob's first time away from his family. He escaped his daily afternoon nap and rose off the couch. His power naps were the only thing which stayed constant throughout his transition into adulthood. Much of his life had changed, and many of his old friends were left behind as he went seeking success in the world's economic capitol, New York. As a young entrepreneur, his start-up company required extreme dedication and effort. His daily commutes to and from the offices gave him time to plan his day and just think about whatever he felt. Living in New York City, the quiet subway journeys were unappreciated blessings as most of the city was constantly buzzing with energy.

He walked past hundreds of people on his way to the station as usual, not paying any attention to them. Soon, he arrived and saw the train was right on schedule. Aside from a slight delay getting ready for work, the day was as ordinary as it could have been. This was, after all, his second month in New York City and he was determined to fit in. A beep sounded overhead, alerting him of the nearing train. Seats were difficult to find on the train, so he was forced to stand amongst dozens of other passengers. As the doors shut, he scanned the room without much thought and quickly dug his hands into his pockets while playing music into his earbuds.

The bus, crowded with many other ordinary commuters, contained an awkward atmosphere which was viewed as standard by the frequent riders. People stared at their phone screens throughout the entirety of the trip, avoiding any eye contact with those sitting so close. An unwritten rule of not protruding into others' business was known amongst nearly everyone in New York. This had become clear to Jacob the moment he attempted to make light conversation with a seemingly friendly person sitting in front of him when he first arrived. The man promptly responded to this futile attempt with an intense glare, teaching the embarrassed Jacob to stay silent and keep to himself. He kept his hands in his pockets from then on and found new ways spend his time.

*Ding!* A sound similar to an alarm stirred Jacob, who had dozed off after a few minutes of contemplation on his duties for the day. His stop was nearing, and as the train skidded to a halt, he slowly exited the station with both hands tucked into his jacket. The blast of cold air as he stepped off the train was a rude reminder of the harshness of New York. Anyhow, he wasn't bothered and briskly walked towards his building. It was an exciting day for his company, as they were handing out flyers to advertise an event they would be hosting the next week. Him and his team set off strategically, distributing the area between people. Jacob, who was a great peoples' person, was confident in his abilities to attract pedestrians and entered his designated location eager to meet those who would possibly attend their event.

The first hour of the task was slightly underwhelming to Jacob, and with less than a dozen people accepting the flyers, Jacob was somewhat disappointed. Resilience, however, was a defining trait within Jacob and he was sure to improve his results within the next few hours. This optimistic mindset was to no avail though, only giving him a false impression of the surprising carelessness of people towards promotion distributors and any other public annoyances on the street. The world kept busy, while the disheartened Jacob was left bitter. "Would you like a flyer?", he repeated in growing volume. Every rejection stung greater than the last for him, with many just keeping their heads down and hands deep into their pockets. What was once an exciting milestone for his company became a nightmare of denial.

At the end of the day, he returned to his office and met up again with his team, who all thought the endeavor was a success. Jacob refrained from giving his opinion and congratulated everybody on their hard work. He walked to the station shortly after and rode the subway home in silence, apart from the music in his ears. Staring at a blank wall, Jacob assured himself that he would never become like one

of those people that rejected him; rude and unforgiving. The entire environment of New York was hostile towards Jacob, it seemed. Its unfamiliar aura of disapproval was nothing like what he experienced in his home town. That night Jacob slept poorly, wondering about the contents of the next day as usual but also frustrating over the difficulty of living in New York. A gradual pessimistic mindset festered in Jacob's mind.

The next day Jacob woke with a grumble. His usual subway ride filled with happy tunes from the past decade was replaced with empty noise and the typical subway sounds. On his way to work, after leaving the station, he walked with his head down and hands hidden within his wide pockets. "Would you like a flyer, sir?", asked a man handing them out on the sidewalk. Startled, Jacob turned to look at him. "We're having a fundraiser for an organization in a few days if you would like to come!", the man continued enthusiastically. Jacob, who was taken aback by this, glared at the man rudely and walked off. *What nerve this man has, disturbing my quiet morning*, Jacob thought. An epiphany struck him like a bolt of lightning though, allowing him to realize what he had become. He returned to the man and apologized, asking for a flyer. The man obliged and Jacob soon saw clearly the cause of all his problems. *Pockets*.

Those holes used for convenience had become an escape tool, used to disconnect from others and appear occupied. Making a conscious effort now to escape their depths, he vowed to rid his life of cruel pockets and become more open.