

Normal Like You

by .Speechless Poems.

Why is there always a frown
When there should be a smile?
Why is the rain always coming down
When you wish for one ray of sunlight?
Why are the days always so long
When the night is gone in a blink of an eye?
Why does it seem that everyone has a place that they belong
When I struggle so hard just to be noticed?
Why is it, that people who have much and all they need
When they look at me, they wish me to suffer and bleed?
Why is the world always so cold and dreary
When I awake, my eyes are red and bleary?
Why am I doomed to be looked down upon
When all I want is to be normal like you?
Why are all these unanswered questions just floating around
When they could just leave me alone?
Why does my life have to be in complete disarray
When all I want is a happiness that cannot be found?
Why am I blessed with talents that no one can see
When all I am asking, is some acceptance?
Why is it, that I'm stuck in this cycle
When all I want is just to be free?
Why do you look at me, repulsed and disgusted
When I didn't ask for this, this destiny choose me?
Why can't you see, I'm just trying to survive
When all you see is just another street kid?
Why don't you understand, we all aren't made of money
When you stand there and scoff, while I wait for the highest bid?
Why don't you just open your heart, maybe just a little
When you see me sitting there, begging everyday?
Why don't you help me out, and give me a little pay
When you read my sign, every word ringing true?
Why can't you see, it's hard work that I do
When I'm out here, just asking, begging, pleading with you?
Why don't you stop pointing your nose in the air
When I ask "Spare change?" Just acknowledge me there.
Why does this world have to be so cruel and unfair
When all I want is a dry place to sleep, and to wash my hair?
Why am I doomed to be looked down upon
When all I want is to be normal like you?

Questions

by Amanda Seaver

What does one do?
When it all seems too good to be true?
Do we,
Embrace the dreams and the hope that is attached to it?
Or remember the memories,
Of pain when it all got ripped from my grasp the time before?
I want to believe,
I want to hope,
But I don't want to hurt all over again.
Is it true this time?
Or is this just the dreams of a hopeful child
Looking to be shattered all over again?
Yet to dream,
Is to want,
But to want,
Is to be hurt again,
Now the only question left is this,
Is all of this worth the pain all over again?

Homeless cartoonist helps Philly students address addiction

BY KEVIN ROBERTS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Robert Hayes and his "Lil Addict" cartoon have been a fixture on the pages of Philadelphia's street newspaper produced by the homeless. Now "Lil Addict" is going to school, graduating to a place within the Philadelphia School District.

Parent University, a Philadelphia district initiative offering free day and evening classes to parents, is partnering with "Lil Addict" to provide a resource to engage parents and their children on addiction and recovery.

"We want to encourage parents reading with their children and talking to their children about staying away from drugs," said Karen James, director of call center and operations for the school district of Philadelphia. "We'd ultimately like to have a book club discussion, of the issues the character went through, the challenges he faced, and how he overcame them."

"We want to teach children that life is not always a bowl of cherries. There are obstacles, and you have to fight through them. Robert is someone who had been there, and has gone through it, and knows what he's talking about. We're happy to support him in his effort, because he's using his situation to better himself. And he has talent."

One Step Away is Philadelphia's first street newspaper, and the only street paper in the country in which most of the content is produced by the homeless men, women and children in the city shelters. Hayes, a resident at RHD Ridge Center, began contributing his "Lil Addict" cartoons shortly after One Step Away debuted in January, 2010.

"Lil Addict" tells the story of addiction, temptation and recovery in ways that are sometimes whimsical and sometimes serious, but always thought-provoking. In

many ways, it is Robert's story.

Robert was taking advantage of the workshops at Parent University and showing off his cartoons as they appeared in One Step Away. Several instructors saw and liked the comic. As Robert began talking about putting a book together, James and Karren Dunkley, deputy chief of the school district of Philadelphia, agreed to purchase a "Lil Addict" comic book and make it available in the resource center for Parent University.

"I've always wanted to use the comic to raise awareness with young people," Robert said. "I'm very grateful for this opportunity with the school district of Philadelphia."

The only change to Robert's work is the title. The School District will call the book "Tales of Recovery." The cartoon will still run in One Step Away as "Lil Addict."

Robert has recently found full-time employment and is set to leave the shelter soon. But he'll keep drawing "Lil Addict," and continue to appear in the pages of One Step Away. Robert credited Alan Bell, the artist-in-residence at the Ridge Center, with helping him turn a hobby into something much more.

"I first started drawing 'Lil Addict' as an outlet when people in the facility would irritate me," Robert said, with a laugh. "Alan Bell really helped me develop it, and soon I started thinking that it could be a helpful tool for people in recovery."

"When One Step Away started publishing the cartoon, it motivated me to do more. I had a sense of pride, and I felt like I had accomplished something. The first time I saw it in the newspaper, that's when I really knew that I could do something I wanted to do."

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The Lil' Addict cartoon by Robert Hayes is now being used in Philadelphia schools to teach children about the perils of drug use.