Alive

A part of him wanted to die in the operation theatre.

Drugged up, unconscious...

Painless.

A part of him hoped, as the OR nurse told him to count back from 10 with the mask over his mouth, to never wake up, to never come back to reality.

But he survived.

The procedure was simple, and his condition would have been life threatening about 200 years ago, but he still kind of hoped all the same. Instead he came back to a bleak hospital room overflowing with excessively worried people, fussing and preening over him.

He walked out of the hospital doors with these thoughts running through his head, and was hit by the cold wind, like an icy splash of water that jerked him out of his reverie. He wrapped his scarf around his mouth and pulled his jacket a little closer around him, trying to keep as warm as possible.

He did not consider himself to be some sort of suicidal maniac nor was his life so depressing that he felt his problems could only be solved with a swan dive. He just wanted to escape.  
  
It was the monotony of it all, the constant drag he felt.

And it's not like I'm gonna throw myself in front of the next bus, he thought to himself.

The streets were crowded with people making their way to work, carrying on with their lives. Crowds bustled about like they did everyday, every week and every year. He looked around for a cab, but found none. As he trudged forward, he pulled his scarf tighter around his face, finding little mercy from the wind.

When he woke up after the surgery, he was more surprised than scared. Nurses bustled about, poking and prodding at him every now and then, but for the most part he was left to his own dark thoughts.

And so he pondered his existence...

Now as he walked amongst the living once more, he felt distant. He felt like the normal world, with its obsession with fashion and technology could not grasp his grim view on life.

What do they know of pain and suffering? Or so he thought.

As he neared the corner of the street, his eyes fell on a vagabond leaning against the wall. The man was in his late thirties and wore his scruffy clothes with particular indifference. his hair was matted and dirty, and there were pieces of food stuck in his beard and he had in his hand, the obligatory tin can. Most striking was the cardboard sign he wore around his neck. The sign was like most, hand drawn without much care but it was the question itself that called attention. Like most signs of similar nature, this one too asked a question that was witty and thought provoking at the same time. As he neared the hobo and smirked as he read the sign, he thought to himself,

Now here's a guy who knows what it feels like to be me!

He stopped for a second and pulled out a roll of 100 dollar bills from his jacket pocket and started flipping through it, before stopping himself.

Let's not get carried away, he thought to himself.

He replaced the roll, and the fumbled through all his pockets, until he came upon a crumpled 20 dollar bill, the smallest denomination he had. He dropped the bill in the cup and said," You take care, man."

The homeless man smiled his wide, slightly toothless smile and replied, "Thanks bro!"

He flinched a little as a wave of cheap booze, dried vomit and general oral degeneration washed over him, and fought his gag reflex. Quickly though ,he regained himself, flashed a smile and turned to cross the road.

As he turned and stepped on the road, he was jerked back by the scruff of his jacket. The bus blazed past him, out of control, moving so fast his scarf and jacket whipped around him in a fury.

He should have died.

As he staggered back, the homeless man, with his unmistakable stench, and hand still on the collar of the jacket asked him,

"You okay, bro?"

Still caught in a daze, the mans words barely cut through to him as he looked around at the crowd forming around him, till his eyes fell on that eloquent cardboard sign.

Yes, it felt good to be alive.

Nizamudin Sharaf