The Encounter

I walked out of Starbucks. I probably shouldn’t have bought the coffee, considering my apartment rent was due, and I was almost completely broke. And it was almost Christmas. Perfect. You see, I have a gambling problem. I’m always borrowing money from friends, just surviving, just getting by. Snow is falling down slowly in the quiet downtown as my feet slush against the wet snow on the sidewalk. I walked on for a few more minutes, toward the casino, my IPod blasting rock tunes into my skull. The song was The Unforgiven II by Metallica. It was the perfect song for my current state. I graduated high school a couple years ago, not doing anything productive with my life right now. I look to the right of the sidewalk to see a seemingly homeless fellow resting under a cafe canopy, huddled in a sleeping bag. He was smiling a weird smile at me. *Creep.* I thought. He looked about by age. I wondered about his life, his story. Was he a gambler, too? He was a normal looking guy, unshaven, dressed in old, battered jeans, a dirty Reebok sweatshirt, and an old, musty hunting jacket. “Hello, Jimmy.” He said, as if he knew me my whole life. It caught me off guard. I’ve never even seen this man before. I looked into his eyes. There seemed to be a glint of something in them, something spiritual. I took of my earphones. “I’m sorry, have we met before?” The man got up and said, “I’m afraid not.” He had a charismatic smile and something about him was...mystical. He suddenly grabbed my cup of coffee. “Do you mind?” he asked. “Um, no, go ahead.” He gulped down the scalding coffee in literal seconds. “Thank you,” he said, “and I believe this belongs to you.” He went to his sleeping bag and pulled out a large suitcase. He handed it to me. It was heavy, and to my amazement I saw hundreds of twenty dollar bills. He smiled. “It’s enough to pay your rent for a year,” then he looked serious, “I trust you will use it wisely.” Tears came to my eyes. “Thanks.” Was all I could utter. After a few minutes of emotion I said, “I don’t know how to thank you. You should stay with me at my apartment for a while. You look freezing.” He laughed out loud, “Where I come from, it is never cold.” He held out his right hand. “I’m Gabriel by the way. I shook his hand and felt a surge of an otherworldly power surging from his hand to my body. “God bless you, my brother,” he shot with a strong voice, “And merry Christmas.” I smiled, “Thank you.” I looked down at the suitcase or a split second and looked up again. Gabriel was gone. Without a sound. There were no footprints on the sidewalk and his sleeping bag was gone, just like that. I sighed. After that day I never gambled again. I reunited with my family. I got accepted into a university and got a well-paying part time job. Things in my life finally started to fall in place. And I now believe in miracles.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

-Hebrews 13:2 KJV