



Miracles

Classroom for the Universal Course

July ~ August ~ 2021

**“DAD, DON'T EVER
THINK OF ME
AS DEAD!”**

WHAT NEED DO I HAVE FOR YOU?

AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL BIRTHDAY GIFT

Lifted Above the Battleground—Over Lunch

by Allan Ishac

My friend Larry broke his hip a few years ago and was convalescing in his East Village apartment in New York City. He had just traded his walker for a cane and wanted to celebrate by going out to lunch. The popular Ukrainian restaurant, Veselka, was just two blocks away and, while packed on Saturdays, we decided it was the closest place with decent food.



In Veselka’s entrance area, we added our names to the waiting list and were told it would be about 15 minutes. Larry shuffled over to an empty counter stool to rest his hip as he leaned on his cane, while I exchanged greetings with the manager, Gary, who I’ve known for years.

After five minutes, a man walked in who was about our age, around 60, slightly heavysset with a scowl on his face and the fed-up look of a local. He glanced around, then walked up to Larry and growled, “Hey, you just waiting around or you going to sit there?”

Larry responded that he was waiting for a table, to which Angry Local replied, “Then how about getting up so I can eat something?”

Larry didn’t respond, but I did: “Hey, he’s hurt, can’t you see the cane?”

Angry Local: “Calm the hell down, buddy, alright? No, I didn’t see the cane.”

That made me angrier: “He just broke his hip a week ago, and he’s using the counter seat to rest his leg, is that a problem?”

Angry Local: “Friggin’ relax, okay, I didn’t see it.”
Turning to Larry, “Sit back down if you want.”

But Larry was already off the stool, hobbling to an empty chair placed near the entrance for the elderly to wait. I exchanged lethal looks with Angry Local and we muttered profanities at each other as he took the counter stool and I rejoined my friend.

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Larry said he didn’t care and no big deal, but I snapped back that he shouldn’t have given up the stool, that the guy had made a fool out of us. Now I was swearing out loud and plotting revenge. I told Larry I needed to step outside to cool down and proceeded to pace in front of Veselka’s big front window, occasionally peering in at Angry Local with as much “Go Screw Yourself” attitude as I could muster. He was peering back at me with the same degree of condemnation.

I considered going back in and getting in his face again but rejected that idea as stupid and possibly dangerous. Then I remembered my manager friend, Gary, and wondered if I could convince him to “taint” Angry Local’s food order. But I realized that was immature.

It occurred to me then that this ego attack was going to ruin my lunch and probably the rest of my day. And, suddenly, I thought of the Course and its suggestion that at these times, we must ask for help. So, I did. I leaned against the frame of Veselka’s front window, closed my eyes, and said inside my head, “I can’t spend my day like this. Please help me.”

Instantly I heard back, “Buy him lunch.”

Instantly I heard back, “Buy him lunch.” I quickly opened my eyes, as my inner maniac went into overdrive: “What?! Buy him lunch? Are you kidding, he’s an SOB, there’s no way?”

I closed my eyes again and asked for “better help.” Quietly inside my head: “Buy him lunch.” I started to argue with the voice, refusing this ridiculous idea, enumerating the many reasons why it made no sense. But after a minute, I started to admire the disarming nature of it.

I went back inside feeling a bit calmer but resisted looking over at Angry Local so I wouldn’t heat up again. Two minutes later, Larry and I were ushered to our table about 15 feet from Angry Local’s seat at the counter, his back to me and mine to him.

As soon as we ordered, I called Gary over, pointed out Angry Local, and told him I wanted to buy the guy’s lunch. “Oh, that’s very nice,” Gary said. “You know him? He comes in quite a bit.”

I said, no, but that we had talked, and I wanted to buy him lunch, so please bring me his bill when he’s finished, and I’ll take care of it. And please don’t tell him it was me.

Larry overheard the exchange and after Gary walked away said, “Wait, what, why would you buy that guy lunch, that’s absurd?”

“I know it is,” I told him, but I explained that I needed to make peace with myself and him, and that was the way I was going to do it.

Twenty minutes went by and Gary came over with Angry Local’s bill for \$14. I gave him a \$20 bill and told him to

give the change to the waiter. Five minutes later, Larry looked over my shoulder and said, “The guy’s coming over here.”

I felt myself brace a bit, my heart racing, and around a row of tables came Angry Local, moving slowly, looking our way, perplexed and slightly sheepish. He walked directly to me and put out his hand to shake.

“That was a classy move,” he said, in not an angry way at all. “You didn’t have to do that, but that was a really classy gesture.”

I shook his hand and told him that I thought I had taken it too far, that I was sorry and wanted to make it up to him. Angry Local said that it was maybe he who went overboard and, again, that I was classy. “That was a real New York moment, wow, I’ll never forget it,” he said.

He proceeded to talk for another few minutes, said he was a writer, lived in the neighborhood, mentioned that 10 years ago we probably would have stepped outside to take care of business. I laughed, thinking that this guy who I wanted to smash in the teeth a half hour earlier was probably a decent guy, a writer, too, and friendly.

Then he started to leave and said once more as he pointed his finger at me, “You’re a classy guy, that was really something.”

Later that evening, I realized that “Buy Him Lunch” was a miracle message, one that took everyone affected into consideration and left only winners. I will never forget how these three simple words lifted me above the battleground that day ... over lunch.

Allan Ishac is the author of the regional bestseller, New York’s 50 Best Places To Find Peace And Quiet. He has been an ACIM student since 1986. He is currently working on a spiritual coming of age novel based on themes in ACIM.