

skin't knee

straynge

His trail name was straynge.

Trail names are fascinating. sometimes the traveler will name him-herself and sometimes she / he will be dubbed by other hikers moving together. it often splashes a bit of nonchalant insight about the person that sets them apart in a unique word or two. it may involve a story and it may not. it's not complicated. my trail name is 'rooster' because people seem to think i have skinny chicken legs.

straynge and i met as i 'yomped' down from a long downhill section on the Appalachian trail into the porch area of Laughing Heart Hostel.

in his first words to me, we connected over the word -a b i d e .

"hi, i'm Straynge with a 'Y,' 'a b i d e', man i get that, me too" alluding that he was putting some thinking together and cool with the journey.

he painted his words with strong language. i liked him from the beginning. he unpacked his welcome a bit more and reminded me again, "that's with a "Y" remember!?! i only like strange people. i like you." what made Me strange enough to him i can't say and neither did he. his face had a story. all of our faces have a story.

a lot of people want to tell you at least part of their story, others don't. he had gotten off trail and had a slow plan to get back home in the Northwest, but for the time being he was staying at the hostel doing odd jobs and working on 'the pond' which he held with a special significance and his face beamed when he told me about it.

straynge was easy to talk to - no posturing or shamming.

he spoke as if i knew exactly what he meant.

there was a kindness about him though he had been 'broken on the wheels of living.' we have all been 'broken on the wheels of living.'

we were talking about how beautiful and green the trail was for long stretches to then come upon vibrant colors. in passing i mentioned seeing mushrooms in a formation that i described as a mushroom ladder on the side of a tree that looked like they had been dipped in red wax. it turns out that he had quite a running knowledge of mushrooms. and for further study he recommended a documentary on netflix. i was not surprised at all.

God gave me a nudge and i realized it as it was happening. i had only just met straynge. we spoke for maybe 15 minutes if you added it all together, but i saw him. i didn't know him well. i couldn't tell you the name of his first pet, but i liked him - not from a lofty place, just a simple place of life to life.

people dismiss people all the time and miss great moments -

believers sometimes dismiss nonbelievers and miss great moments.

maybe we know it, maybe we don't. in the gift of the moment, i liked him because he was right there. i heard him. i saw him. i smiled with him because i believe had Jesus been with us in his skin at Laughing Heart Hostel, tired after a long downhill trudge and He met Straynge, i know that he would've like him too. He was indeed there but i was the one wrapped in skin.

Straynge is surely not throwing words on a page that few will read about our brief conversation and he has certainly forgotten me as much as i remember him, but to be clear, i was the one who was welcomed. Straynge could've just let me pass by without a word.

Jesus teaches us all we need to know. He noticed, laughed with liked, loved and ate with people in the margins. He told a story once of how to care for people and how they should be treated, "Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me."

-g.

