

REAL WORTH

There was once a small country at the very edge of the world. This country was so small it housed only a couple of tiny villages with its main attraction being its capital and only the city Wunderbar. As you may already know “Wunderbar” means wonderful in German. No one really knew the inspiration behind this name but no one really questioned as the ancient ruler who had founded this country and all its land was quite an eccentric person who had a love for different languages so it didn’t come as a shock that every single settlement in this country was named in a different language.



Now next to this city, in small village is where our story begins. In this village there lived a small boy called Aeros who wasn’t the richest or the tallest but he sure was the happiest. Many people in the village wondered how a boy with not much in his life could be so happy and some even went up to him and asked him. His reply was always the same.

“Would riches or strength or length guarantee my happiness? I’m happy because of what I have in the inside, not the outside” and he would walk on. A lot of people would comment on this boy’s character and tried to teach their kids to learn from him.



The truth was Aeros wasn’t like this just because he was, rather because of the values his mother instilled in him from the very beginning. Very soon these values would be tested as he moved on to secondary school.

As the village in which Aeros lived was quite small, all the children completed their primary education here and when the time came to start secondary they would journey to the great city of Wunderbar. This school had a lot of new rules all the village kids had to learn. One of them being their new school's dress code which was extremely strict and therefore every student had to stick to it rigidly for fear they may be kicked out of school. For the children in the city whose parents had good jobs and more money, school uniforms wasn't much of a worry but for the village kids especially Aeros, this seemed like the most difficult task in the world.



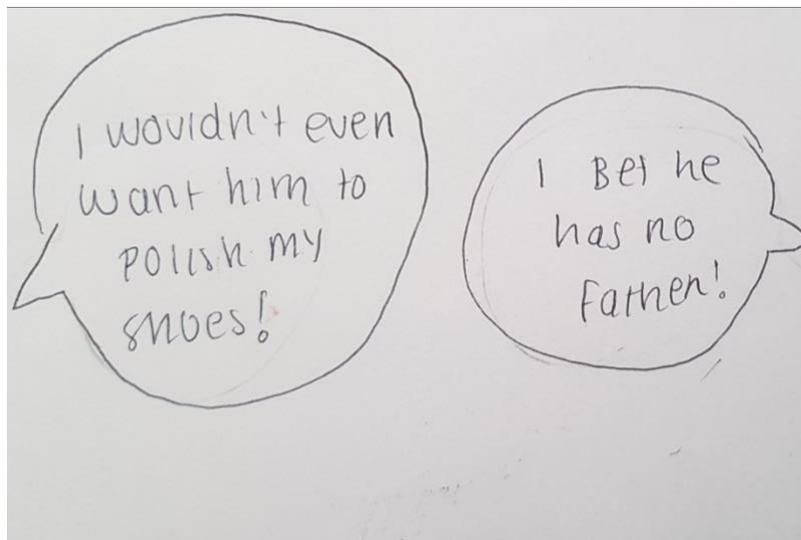
But Aeros's mother was a hard worker who loved her son very much so she worked extremely hard sometimes doing two jobs, saving until finally she had enough money to get Aeros some good clothes. And the night before he went to his new school, Aeros's mother came to him and surprised him with his new clothes. He was so excited and thanked his mother over and over again. He hardly ever got new clothes especially not as good as these so when he got up the next morning he readied himself quickly so as not to be late and took extra care on how he looked. After all you only go to secondary school once and it's an important part of life.



He carried his excitement all the way on the journey to the big city. This was until he actually got to the school. He had been so excited but now began to wonder what if he didn't understand what they were teaching him? What if no one liked him? And worst of all what if they turned him away at the door, telling him there had been some terrible mistake and he wasn't actually meant to be there!

"NO!" he thought loudly. That couldn't happen. His mother had worked too hard to get him here and anyway all the children before him had gone to school here so what problem could there be? "Well maybe because you're the poorest out of all of them", said a nasty voice in his head but Aeros just shook his head to clear it. This was silly. He had never cared about how he looked and he wasn't going to start now.

But that all changed the moment he stepped inside the halls of this prestigious school. Everyone was dressed as if they were going to a party: all the girls in elegant dresses and all the boys he saw were in silk suits that were sure to cost more than all of his clothes put together. Now he felt sick to the stomach. He would look completely out of place. And for the remainder of the day this thought continued echoing in his ears so loud that he forgot it didn't really matter what you wore, he forgot the real reason he was here; to learn. This singular thought of not being good enough just played in his head.



Then came lunch time when all the village kids were gathered in the village to get to know each other. Throughout this time, Aeros couldn't help noticing "how good that suit looks on him" and "how I wish I could afford such clothes". He was so lost in these thoughts that he completely lost track of the conversation he was having until a voice brought him back to reality. He looked around, startled, trying to figure out who just talked to him.

"Aeros, I was saying, who's your father?" said a pretty girl on the left. But before he could even begin to think about the question, another voice spoke up.

"Oh why are you asking him. Look at him, I wouldn't even want him to polish my shoes. And anyways I bet he doesn't even have a father!" said a brown haired boy. Aeros remembered he was called Julian. Aeros narrowed his eyes. It wasn't in his nature to get angry but Julian's words hit a nerve. His father had died and all the village kids knew it so whenever Aeros would say, "He's alive and I'll show you him today at the end of school" they knew he just wished his father was alive and let him be.

At the end of the school day, Aeros knew Julian would come looking so he had already thought of an idea. He found the richest looking man and pointed towards him telling Julian that this was his father. This satisfied Julian but the man had overheard and once Julian left, came over. Aeros knew he was in trouble the second he saw the man coming over. So he was shocked when the first thing he said was, "you're not in trouble child". He merely wanted to know why he had lied and why it was him who Aeros picked out of the crowd. He listened intently as Aeros explained the situation truthfully and after it was over, led him to his car.



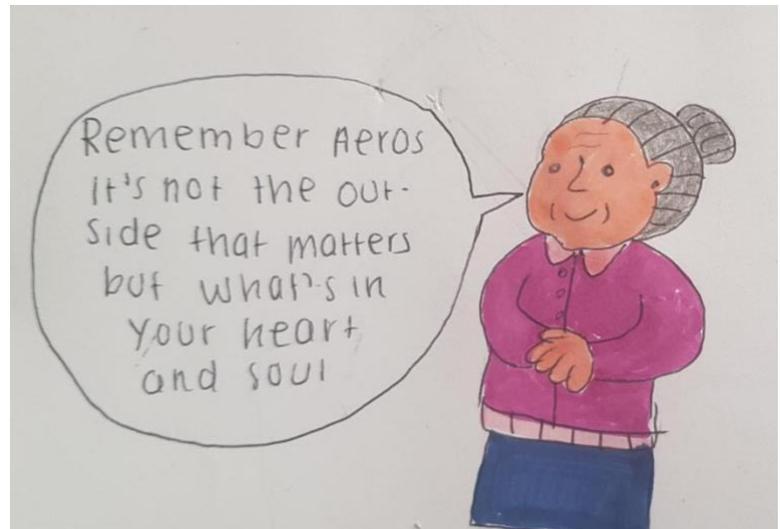


“Child do you want to know my most valuable possession” Aeros nodded expecting to see a diamond encrusted watch. Instead he opened a door to a building and all he saw was a small child that belonged to the infant side of the school. “I’m sorry sir”, he said,” but I don’t quite see what you’re showing me. All I see is this child”

“And that”, replied the man,” is my most valuable possession. My son is the only remnant of the wife I lost. So you see it doesn’t matter how much money one has. The most valuable thing in my life is what’s inside my heart and soul”

And that made Aeros remember his mother’s words: “it’s not the outside that matters but what’s inside your heart and soul”.

That day he learned two things: it really didn’t matter what you others have around you as that’s only the outside. What matters is what you have inside, the closeness of your loved ones. You couldn’t put a price on happiness because real happiness is counting each and every blessing. And these are in all the small and big things in life!



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