

Ghost Searches Downtown

by Michael Parker

I walked to the bakery where we used to buy our weekly bread. I meandered through parking lots looking for our mini-van. I searched the faces in the grocery store trying to see Elle. Does she search the passing faces for a resemblance of me?

I scoped out the city park, gazing at the faces of the children on the playgrounds. Do any of them have my eyes or smile? I visited the city library and then haunted the entrances of our restaurants, theaters, and farmer's market.

Despondent, and not remembering the way home, I took to the heart of the city. The streets and sidewalks were furiously alive. Cars were out in droves, passing to and fro like angry bees. People strolled by in faceless crowds, like giant flurries of storms crossing the valley with the saintly demeanor of purple-robed priests entering Communion.

I looked imploringly at the people approaching me. I held out my hands like a beggar. Each hand held a photo of my wife or kids. "Excuse me, have you seen my family?"

I knew that if just one person would look at the photos, they might recognize one of the faces and that would awaken a memory in them, and then that memory would become a story that they could tell. And then that story might be one of the missing stories that would fill part of my hungry void. But no one looked at me, nor even noticed me. No one told a story.

