

Rich

You're 45 now, but you doubt you'll live another ten years. Life on the street isn't easy. Especially with a mangled arm.

You were a construction worker. Damned good job with decent pay for someone who never graduated high school. Sure it was hard work, but it felt good to work with your hands and watch buildings go up month after month, year after year. There was something powerful and majestic about knowing that you were building something that was going to last. Didn't much matter that the folks that lived and worked in the buildings couldn't tell an angle measure from a vice grip. It was the work, building things, that was meaningful.

Plus, you've never complained about hard work or hard times. They just happen. They can happen to anyone. You at least have the decency to just deal with it. You don't whine about it. You don't take handouts. You deal.

The accident happened while you were on the job three years back. Some new guy who didn't know what he was doing and wasn't properly supervised slipped up. He didn't secure a beam correctly and you were in the way when it came loose. You were touch and go in the hospital for about a week. You made it through though. Your arm didn't. You've still got it and all, but it doesn't work right. Too many broken bones and disconnected whatever.

You couldn't work without two good arms. The guys from the old job came to see you while you were in the hospital, but you cut ties once you got out. No good in being pitied. Too tempting to give in and start just being a sponge. You couldn't stand yourself if you ever did that.

You had been married years before, but your wife died three years before the accident. Cancer. Another one of those things you just have to deal with. It was hard, but you got through that. That means you can get through this. Unfortunately, it also wiped out the nest egg the two of you had saved up for retirement. That meant that once you were out of the hospital and had cut ties with the guys, and weren't taking handouts, you weren't long for your old way of life. At least you didn't have any kids. That would have been real hard to deal with. In some ways not having any kids with your wife was one thing you regret. In other ways, it's made dealing with what's left of your life far easier.

Two months after you got out of the hospital you packed up as much of your sturdy clothing as you could carry. You hawked almost everything else aside from a few keepsakes and put every penny that was left in the bank. It was a few grand. That was going to have to last you the rest of your life beyond whatever you could bring in working odd jobs on the street with only one working arm. There's about three hundred bucks left in that bank account now, three years on.

You get by doing honest but simple work. You've learned to do some wood crafts real slow and careful with your left hand. Had to be your right arm that was mangled, too, didn't it? Now, you sell your work to passers by during part of the day and try not to get robbed. It's enough.

Today was a good day for sales. A grandmotherly sort bought most of your collection of knick-knacks. You decided to buy something to toss in Mel's soup pot tonight. It's been awhile since you've enjoyed some warm food, the warmth of the fire and a bit of company. You can try to keep things mellow and maybe help provide direction to some of the folks that have lost their way.

Who You Know

Sarah: Damn stupid girl. What does this kid think she's doing on the streets? She's too young and too pretty. She's got too much potential to just be put to use by other folks here. If you'd had a daughter, she would have been about Sarah's age. That thought doesn't make it any easier.

Alfred: Al is alright, if crazy. He's a good man to drink with and chat about life if you can keep him from talking about aliens. Of course, that isn't easy. At least he doesn't pity you one bit.

Manny: Manny is a good drinking buddy. Manny never says much, but Manny knows about enduring life and getting by. You don't know exactly what Manny saw during the war, but the look in Manny's eyes makes you doubly grateful that all you've got is a mangled arm.

Alex: This kid doesn't get it. Alex needs to go home, go to school, grow up and get a job. Living on the street isn't simple and it isn't glamorous.

Flash: Flash is some special kind of crazy. At least Flash is harmless as long as no one actually believes any of those stories.

Jack: This person uses people up and spits them out. Jack is the worst kind of scum. Jack finds people's weaknesses and sells them a fix that doesn't last. Jack makes people dependent.

Toni: Toni's alright with the guitar and doesn't have a bad voice. Nothing special, despite what Toni thinks. You put Toni in touch with a few bars though, 'cause Toni is willing to work and deserves the opportunity.

Corvus: If Alex is dumb about being on the streets, Corvus is an absolute idiot. Corvus needs to go home, go to school, grow up and get a job. Corvus needs to wake up and see the real world, not some stupid hocus pocus.

Rose: You haven't seen her in five days. You know where she usually sleeps, but she hasn't been there. You're worried about what might have happened.

Mel: Mel's fire is the closest thing there is to a center for this street community. You're glad it's here.