

# The Little Squeegee Kid The Little Squeegee Kid

(Street Sheet Canada)

By Rodney Graham

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The cold wind tore at the exposed skin of the little squeegee kid. She sat huddled on the sidewalk in front of Hudson's Bay Department store on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg.

Sitting on top of her few belongings, a small backpack and a blanket, she held a little plastic bag containing new lighters she had bought from a marketing company nearby. A metro bus came hurtling past and she turned her head to avoid the blast of icy wind that



swished across her small frame.

'Would you like to buy a lighter? help me out please?'

No one had bought even one lighter - a bit of change was given though by nervous pedestrians. She had been sitting there for hours. It was now 5 P.M. on Christmas Eve. Everyone was too busy to bother with a street person, or even to notice her, they were far too busy; shopping, dining, and getting ready to the happy family day tomorrow. Magic was in the air.

As Ashley sat on the sidewalk it was blaringly obvious to her the way passersby avoided eye

contact with her. It was more cruel than the biting cold. If it was only a bit less chilling out she would have blushed...

The way that men and women, mostly today..Christmas Eve, had their children with them - whole families. Unlike the adults, they stared. How uncomfortable it made her feel. Even though the younger ones seemed to have sympathy in their eyes - especially the youngest ones - it hurt her more actually, because it just confirmed in her young mind that injustice was her lot.

An elegant mother, tall, rather good looking came walking by. Her three children in tow. The father behind. The boy was about twelve, his sister 10, the youngest a girl about 6.

As they passed the younger was nearer to Ashley - she slowed and stared...as if in shock. Her mouth opened.

Sensing some kind of 'danger' the pretty mother grabbed her youngster and pulled her along.

The little girl looked back as her mother practically dragged her.

Ashley turned her

head - Her eyes swelled with tears but she tried hard to suppress her feelings.

A lump knotted in her throat.

She coughed.

Just then a young couple with a German Shepherd walked by they both stopped and looked at her. She noticed them. She wished they would go away. Knowing it was going to make her feel worse.

They had compassion in their eyes. Unusual. They had seen the wet lines on her cheeks. The young man came over while his eyes kept focused on her he dropped a two dollar coin into the lap of little Ashley. his girlfriend frowned. She reached into her purse and walked over to her and dropped a five dollar bill. It was the first money she was given for hours.

"Thanks..." she said nervously, her eyes did not make contact with the woman. They couple walked slowly away. They were talking. Probably about her.

She sighed.

She wiped her eyes with her sleeves.

They didn't return.

The little squeegee kid had slept under a bridge the night before. She hadn't been able to find any other young people the stay with because she was new in town. Social Services wouldn't help her because she refused to be 'processed' (Give information about herself) she feared being sent home

to Vancouver, where abuse awaited her - and didn't want to go to one of those traumatizing shelters - the street was even better - in her mind.

The City of Winnipeg had recently made it illegal to squeegee (wash car windows for money) something that greatly benefits desperate youth all across Canada if they are just allowed to do it. Her boyfriend had recently departed - something that often happens in relationships where money and the future looks bleak. Love dwindles. Friction builds.

The aroma of freshly baked turkey from a nearby upscale restaurant wafted in the air along with the smell of freshly brewed coffee. Numb with cold her eyelids were heavy and she was feeling almost as if she was detached from her body - almost, as if she was somewhere else.

The light from the fading sunset shimmering up and down rising skyscrapers. They surrounded her like heartless sentinels of Hades.

'Got to keep warm,' she thought. She flicked a lighter and held it in her palms. Her eyes fell closed.

She awoke sitting in front of a large fireplace. Stockings full of presents were hung from its sides. The warmth embraced her. Stretching her feet towards the fireplace to warm them she suddenly found herself back on the ice-cold sidewalk on Portage Avenue.

She flicked a lighter again. This time she was standing in front of a tall Christmas tree. It had hundreds of lights. It was

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