

It was the summer of 1934 and a man returned from another day's work. His name was Charles. He had small, beady, gray eyes. His hair was dark black, his skin was pale white, slightly burnt by the harsh sun that he felt every morning on his way to work. His big hands were calloused and blistered from working his job at the coal mine. Charles was a sensitive, kind man, but could be strong and powerful.

He sat at the hard bench next to a table he knew he may have to sell. Charles sat and thought of all the misfortune that had come to him. He thought of good times and bad. He recalled the passing of his youngest son, and of the day the doctor told him his second son was deathly ill.

That sickness was the reason he couldn't live with his family right now. He had taken on almost 800 dollars in debt from a local gang just to pay the doctor's bills. When he did not pay off the loan by the deadline the loan sharks from the gang came after him, and he was forced to flee until he could find the money to pay his debt.

It had been five years since he had see his wife, and his four kids, and he hadn't been there for any of them. He hadn't even be able to write to them in fear the loan sharks would catch him. For the first time in nine years, since the day his second son was buried, he began to cry. His face reddened and tears fell from each of his deep gray eyes.

Next morning Charles awoke with a start. He glanced at the small wooden handcrafted alarm clock on the table. It had been a gift from his father when he was young. The alarm appeared to be broken. It was 7:30. He was sure that he would not make it to work. Charles knew if he was late he would be fired for sure. The demand for work was high and companies could not afford latecomers. He rushed out of bed and quickly pulled on his working pants. He slipped on boots and ran out the door.

The mine was only a fifteen minute walk, and 10 minutes running, but as he rushed to save his job it felt like forever. He ran as fast as he could until he reached the mine, but the gates were shut.

He stifled the urge to cry. He was now sure he had been replaced. Finding a new job in these times would be an impossible feat. Charles thought of giving up, but just then he remembered his loving family back home.

Charles returned home and in a flood of anger he shattered a photo on the wall. He shouted and yelled with fury, and then with all the anger he had ever felt he knocked the small alarm clock given to him by his own father onto the ground. As the clock fell and slowly smashed into the ground breaking into small shards of glass and wood, Charles began to cry again. Charles collapsed on his bed. The events that had taken place that day had literally destroyed him.

As Charles awoke the following morning he looked around the room. He saw first the shattered clock on the floor, then looking around he saw the frame of a picture surrounded by shattered glass. He stood up and first stared at the frame, thinking, what photo did I have in there? Then, looking around the room he had a shocking realization.

He ran to the picture. In shock he saw what he had caused. In his hands he held the broken remains of the last existing photo he had of his family. The glass from the frame had torn through the photo, leaving behind a scratched, torn, and bent photograph.

Charles wiped back a tear from his eyes, and ran his hand through his oily black hair. He knew that he could not stay attached to a material possession forever, but to him it was his only family. That one photo was all he had. and he had destroyed it. Now he may never see an image of his family again. That was all he had, and now it was gone.

Charles opened a box beneath his bed and peered inside. In it contained all of his savings since he had moved away from his family. In total he had 675 dollars and 82 cents. He did the math and figured out that with 125 more dollars he could pay off his family's debt and hop on the back of a train to get home.

The next morning Charles began to brainstorm ideas on how to get the 125 dollars. If he still had his old job he could have gotten the 125 dollars in about six months. Of course some months he worked without pay. The mine owners had told him that in exchange for the new safety standards he would not be payed during certain months.

Charles thought and thought for minutes, then hours, and even a day. Sometimes he thought that he should give up, but every time he felt himself coming to

that he glanced at the shattered remains of his family photograph, and that was all that could keep him going.

Charles thought until it finally hit him, He remembered as a small child his mother always telling him of a older brother that she had not spoken to in years. She had always said he had been better off and that one day after having to support her for so long he eventually left her. She always said she didn't know where he had gone but if he had gone anywhere she always said it would have been Columbus, Ohio. He was only fifteen miles from there now.

Charles rushed out the door as fast as he could move. He knew that there was always a chance that he would arrive in Columbus and his uncle would not even be there, but if he could find him, maybe, just maybe he could help him solve his money problems.

Charles ran faster than the wind, faster than a galloping horse, Charles ran, and ran for miles on end without a single stop. He ran until it hurt to go a single step further, but he pushed until he saw the sign that read in large capitol orange letters WELCOME TO COLUMBUS, OHIO. Charles sighed with relief. He had finally reached the city with the one person in it that could end his problems. Charles hoped that his uncle might even be able to give him a little extra in pity so that after paying off the loan sharks he would have some cash left over so both he and his family would not be broke.

Charles set off into the city in search of his uncle. He knew that his uncle's last name was Milan, and that he ran a factory somewhere. Other than that he had no ideas on how to find him. For all he knew the factory could have been in another state.

Charles whispered a quiet prayer, and set off asking people if they had heard the name Milan. Charles ran around asking, and asking but he had no luck. Charles kept asking until he finally found one man with the answer.

"Hello kind sir," Charles said.

"Hello," said the man.

"I was hoping you could help me find a factory owner who's last name is Milan," Charles said.

"Well actually, I think I may be able to help you there," the man said.

"Well thank you, sir," Charles said.

“Yes, I believe I have seen a factory called Milan Coal Incorporated right on the edge of the city, to the East I believe,” said the man.

“Thank you very much sir,” said Charles.

Charles rushed to the East of Columbus. This was his one chance to find his Uncle, and the money he needs to return to his family. Charles ran up and down city streets, checking signs, and knocking on doors but, he had no luck whatsoever.

Eventually Charles was ready to give up. He stood up against a pole on the street and slowly tried to catch his breath. Charles looked around for a source of water. He scanned the street and glanced through the surrounding buildings windows. He took a few steps forward and saw right at the end of the block a large golden fountain sitting directly outside a corporate building.

Charles walked down the road slowly so that he would not run out of breath. As he walked down the road he looked at each building as he passed. All of the buildings and factories looked amazing, but the thing he noticed the most was a large mining area behind all of the buildings. Charles watched the mining of what seemed like coal as closely as possible until he reached the fountain.

Charles looked around, checking for any guards near the fountain. Finding none he went ahead and took a long sip from the fountain. As Charles brought his head up he read the sign on the corporate building in front of him. In tall dark letters it said, Milan Coal Incorporated. With a gasp Charles ran into the building.

He ran to the front desk and asked “Where can I find the CEO of this company?”

The woman at the desk responded, “On the top floor”.

Charles ran up the stairs as fast as he could move until he reached the top floor. He took a breath as he stood outside the large oak doors of the CEO’s office. Charles approached the door, and with some of the most fear in his life he knocked on the door three times.

A voice inside said, “Come in.”

Charles entered and said, “Are you Mr. Milan?”

“Yes I am,” he said.

“It’s nice to meet you my name is Charles, Charles Milan.”

“Oh my god,” he responded, “I haven’t seen you since you were born.”

“Look, I’m in a bit of a money jam and I could use your help,” said Charles.

Then Charles explained all that had happened in the past few years. His uncle responded, “Okay, I’ll cut you a deal. If you bring your family out here for Thanksgiving, and you eat a feast with me I’ll give you the money plus a little extra.

The next day Charles stood at the train station with the ticket his uncle had bought him. He heard the conductor shout “all aboard!” so he grabbed the bag of fresh clothes he had been given and got onto the train.

Charles got off the train a mile from his home. With excitement he walked to his house and slowly opened the door. His wife shouted, “Charlie!” and she leaped into his arms. All his kids gathered around him hugging and kissing.

The End