

Life After Jail

“On the windows? I had never seen things like those before. There was no window like that but people walking by. No video.” An old man was standing at the front of a building, staring at a huge “window”. Actually, he didn’t even know that those colour “windows” were digital screens.

“I told you I stand out there for a long time watching this crazy stuff. New things were happening.” The man had a deep sigh.

Stepping out into Times Square in New York City, the old guy was struck by the overwhelming number of people. And he was looking at the atmosphere. He saw that everybody or majority of people were talking to themselves. Then he looked closer. People seemed to have things in their ears. Then he looked even closer. Everyone seemed to be walking quickly with blank faces and wires in their ears. He thought to his mind, “What? Every became CIA or agents and stuff like that?” That was the only thing that he could think of. He had no idea what was going on here.

He was confused. Being completely removed from society since 1977, he thought he had entered a dystopia where everyone had become a secret agent wearing wires.

His name was Miller. In December 2017, He was released from prison after serving a 40-year sentence for the attempted murder of a police officer. He went to jail when he was 25 years old. By the time he came out, he was 65 years old. The world was totally different from the day he came out from the prison. Things was changing so rapidly that he could barely carry on his life.

On the first day Miller was released, he noticed a public payphone near the street. He

wanted to make a call to his family. However, he found out that he had no family anymore. Miller lost all his family connection while serving his sentence. He had no girlfriend, no sisters, no brothers and no people that he could communicate with that he had years ago. All he had right now was an ID, documents which outlined his criminal case history, 40 dollars and 2 bus tickets.

Walking alone on the street, the children running past him reminded him of his two nieces. Every time Miller came over, the twins would run to him and one of them used to get behind him and hide. And the other one would be looking for the other twin. So sometimes he would just move to the side so the twin could see the other one, and she'd say "You crossed me!" He remembered that still. He used to love children. He missed his family so badly.

Miller now relied on a non-profit organization that provided housing and services to ex-prisoners. Each day, he tried his best to navigate the world. That was such a painful process because he learned so slowly and felt so helpless when adapting to the whole different environment. He was always thinking that he would rather stay in prison until death. In fact, Miller got along well with the prison guards and cellmates when serving the sentence. They all treated him well and were friendly to him. At least he had friends to talk to, and basically just needed to do his routine. Moreover, the prison already had become his "home" to some extent. Upon release from prison, the solitude he was feeling now was even worse than what he had been through in the prison.

Things weren't getting better until one year after he came out of the prison. He received a letter from his former cellmate – Mike. Mike was released 2 years earlier than Miller. Miller was so surprised that his best friend in the prison still remembered him and managed to find a way to

get in touch with him. From the letter, he acknowledged that Mike found a job and also got married now. “A lot of people said, society owed me because I did all this time, even though I did the crime. I don’t think like that. I don’t feel like that society owes me anything. Everything happens for a reason I believe. So I let that go and deal with the future instead of dealing with the past. I try not to go backward. I try to go forward. That’s how I survive in society.” After reading Mike’s letter, Miller suddenly realized that life was worth living and he began to keep a positive attitude towards life. Even now, when he was 66 years old, Miller realized that it was never too late for anyone to learn and try new things and what could be taken out of the message here was how important it was to view life in a positive manner, and then just carried on.