

Five Miles That Way

Before the lights come up we hear the sound of a bus leaving. Lights come up on a bus stop bench and Kid and Chef running up to the bench waving. But the bus has left. There is a sign for a homeless shelter behind the bench.

Kid gives Chef a nervous look then sits down at one end of the bench. Chef looks at Kid not paying him/her too much attention. Chef then sits down at the opposite end of the bench.

Kid pulls a comic book out of his/her bag and begins to read. Chef checks his/her watch then crosses his/her arms. After a short moment Chef looks over at Kid and notices the comic book.

Chef
What're you reading?

Kid looks over at Chef nervously.

Kid
A comic book...

CHEF
Oh?

KID
Yeah.

CHEF
What brings you to this neighborhood?

KID
Ummm.

CHEF
This ain't exactly the best spot for a kid your age.

KID
I know. But... Down the street there... There's a comic books store.

CHEF
(Looking.)
Really?

KID
Yeah. Well really it's an old used book store, but they have comic books.

CHEF
Huh? I never noticed it.

KID
Most folks don't seem to know it's there.

CHEF
And you come down here for that?

KID
Yeah.

CHEF
Why?

KID
I... I can't afford much and they got good prices on some old comics. They aren't always in the best shape, but if I can get a copy, any copy, of certain issues, it gives me some bragging rights.

CHEF
Huh.

There is a brief silence.

CHEF
So what kind of comic books do you read?

KID
Superheroes. You know, people with superpowers, saving the world.

CHEF
Oh.

Another silence.

Kid
I wish I had superpowers.

CHEF
What?

KID
I wish I had a superpower.

CHEF
Why?

KID
Isn't it obvious?

CHEF
Not to me.

KID
Like, it never occurred to you to think, "What could I do if I could turn invisible." Or fly. Or something like that.

CHEF
No.

KID
Oh.

Another silence.

CHEF

You know... Everybody has a superpower.

KID
What?

CHEF
Everybody has a superpower.

KID
Sure...

CHEF
I mean it.

KID
Is this like some intro to some kind of cult or something? "I can fly if I learn your special meditation technique".

CHEF
No.

KID
Then what do you mean?

CHEF
I mean everybody on Earth has a superpower.

KID
Well? What is it?

CHEF
Oh. It's different for every person.

KID
So how is it that no one knows about it?

CHEF
A few people do know their superpower...

KID
Why just a few?

CHEF
Most people never get put in the position to find out what theirs is.

KID
What do you mean?

CHEF
I think the Universe has some kind of twisted sense of humor, and gives us a power we can never end up discovering.

KID
What do you mean?

CHEF
Well... Suppose you had the superpower of being able to fly.

KID
OK.

CHEF
But the only way it worked was if you fell from thirty feet.

KID
Yeah?

CHEF
So how would you discover that?

KID
Umm... A diving board at a swimming pool.

CHEF
OK. How high are they?

KID
Ten meters.

CHEF
That's about what? In feet.

KID
Close to thirty three.

CHEF
That's not thirty feet.

KID
It's close.

CHEF
Well, the Universe doesn't care about "close". This power only works at thirty feet. Otherwise...

Chef indicates with his/her hands a "splat".

KID
Oh.

CHEF
It would actually be more like thirty two feet six and three quarters inches...

Kid is about to say something.

Chef
And is activated by the word... Oh, "potash".

KID
That's silly.

CHEF
I know. That's what makes it so hard to find out a person's superpower.

KID
Hard? Then you know some?

CHEF
(Sadly.)
Yeah.

KID
Like whose?

Chef looks at Kid for a moment then shakes his/her head. Chef looks out, then points "across the street".

CHEF
See that guy?

KID
The one sleeping on the bench?

CHEF
Yeah.

KID
He's got a superpower?

CHEF
Yeah... Everyone thinks he's crazy. He's always hearing voices. But... In actuality, he hears everything exactly five miles (pointing) that way.

KID
What?

CHEF
Yeah. Five miles. No more, no less. And always that one direction.

KID
That's crazy.

CHEF
That's what people think. (Pause.) Look at him sleeping outside on a bench when there's a homeless shelter right here. You know what's five miles that way?

KID
(Thinking.)
Downtown.

CHEF
Yeah. And five miles from this shelter is a TV News room. Twenty-four hours of all the worst things going on.

KID
Oh.

CHEF
And five miles from that bench?

KID
I have no idea.

CHEF
A bank vault.

KID
Oh.

CHEF
Yeah. Silence all night.

KID
(Pause.)
So... How do you know this?

CHEF
Just a fluke. I was on the phone one day to someone that just happened to be five miles away and I got an echo from that guy over there.

KID
What do you mean?

CHEF
He was mumbling the same conversation next to me.

KID
Oh.

CHEF
It took a while to determine his range and direction, but...

KID
OK. So... What about you?

CHEF
Me?

KID
Yeah. Do you know your own superpower?

CHEF
Yeah.

KID
So what is it?

CHEF
Nothing that I can use to save the world.

KID
Whatever. What is it?

CHEF
It's embarrassing.

KID

So. Tell me. (Pause.) Please.

CHEF

(Sighs.)

I make souffles.

KID

Souffles?

CHEF

Yeah. You know the fancy egg dish. I can't screw them up. They always turn out perfectly.

KID

Oh? And that's embarrassing? But you're a chef or something, right?

CHEF

Yeah. Well, before I knew my power I was a short order cook. And one day my roommate asked me to make a souffle. Just as a lark.

KID

Yeah... That's what people do.

CHEF

No, it isn't. Which is why I should never have found out my power.

KID

So why is this such... Why don't you like your power?

CHEF

I don't like souffles. And I don't particularly like working in restaurants where they are served. I'd rather be back at the diner slinging hash. Making poached eggs. Now those are a challenge.

KID

Challenge? Is that the problem?

CHEF

Maybe. If every time you know it's going to turn out perfectly, where's the interest.

KID

I... I think I see.

CHEF

That's why I'm here.

KID

Here?

CHEF

Yeah. I volunteer here at the shelter. No one here knows about my souffles. And even if they did, they wouldn't want them. The folks here want things like scrambled eggs. You know, things that are going to fill a hungry belly. Warm up a cold body.

KID

You are a hero then.

CHEF
What?

KID
Helping people.

CHEF
Nonsense. What are you talking about?

KID
You know. "Everyday Heroes" like they have on the news from time to time.

CHEF
I say that's nonsense.

KID
Why?

CHEF
Isn't a hero is somebody that goes beyond what people expect?

KID
Yeah.

CHEF
So I'm a hero because I help folks out?

KID
Yeah...

CHEF
Sounds to me like people have their expectations set too low.

KID
I...

Chef looks across to one side of the stage.

CHEF
The bus is coming.

KID
Oh.

CHEF
Now kid, enjoy your comic books, but don't go out looking for your superpower, it isn't going to help you save the world.

KID
But...

CHEF
And even worse... There's almost no chance that knowing what it is will make you happy.

KID

Well...

The SOUND OF A BUS in the distance comes from the side of the stage.

CHEF

Look kid. Don't go through life trying to figure out what makes you special. Just go out and make yourself special.

KID

Sure... I'll do that.

The LIGHTS FADE as the SOUND OF THE BUS stopping covers up anything else that might be said.