“So then I said, ‘Where’s the pickle?’ and he just walked away.” laughed Wyatt.

“Grandpa, you already told me that story,” Richard remarked rather snarkily.

“Did I?”

“No,” Richard snapped sarcastically, “I had heard that same story from some other guy.”

“Oh, ok,” Wyatt replied, sounding rather somber with a hint of disappointment from repeating someone else’s story.

“Of course you told me that before!” Richard sneered, “I don’t think you’ve told me a story only once.”

“Well how else am I supposed to get you to remember them?” Wyatt questioned sarcastically.

“I don’t want to remem- Oh, nevermind.” Richard said as he started walking again. They had been walking through a park, a rather nice park at that, and had only stopped for Wyatt’s often told story. It was a nice summer day, possibly in July, with the sun shining, birds singing, and a crap ton of people outside enjoying the rare time of a truly nice day in Michigan. As they walked the winding path they passed many people, from eight year olds playing tag to adults catching up on life. There were many kids playing on the large wooden play structure and many more out in the field. This was the ideal life, not having a care in the world, at least until your mom comes by and says, “It’s time for practice”, or “You have a dentist appointment in fifteen minutes”. If you walked around for long enough you would probably meet the majority of the town just passing them on the paths that circle the park. It was a favorite place or Richard and Wyatt who would come here in between their various classes and practices in town. The open air and the childlike nature that they could embrace had a huge appeal to them. They both had a rather immature nature even though they were nearing their twenties. Not immature in the way of fart jokes and that sort but in the way of neither of them wanted to fully grow up.
That is why they enjoyed playing tag on the playground with ten year olds and watching children’s TV on Saturday morning.

“Man, it is nice to be out here again,” Wyatt exclaimed, taking a deep breath and looking around the park.

“I know right,” Richard replied, “It seems like forever since the sun was out.”

“When was the last time we got to do something like this?” Wyatt asked while attempting to hurdle the fence that was in their path.

“I think it must have been a month or so, you’ve been so busy with all the crap you’ve been doing,” Richard recalled, “You have been off doing things and not inviting me.” He then walked through the gate of the same fence in their path.

“Well you’ve been busy too. You have been off picking out colleges and jobs and stuff. I figured if I know that you are busy then there is no point in inviting you,” Wyatt responded.

“Fair point, but you still could have invited me. I would gladly put off one these interviews to go do whatever you have been busy doing. Sadly, I have to be responsible.”

“I thought you said you were never going to be responsible,” Wyatt smirked, “I thought you were going to go off and do something fun the rest of your life.”

“Well, I am, but that doesn’t stop the fact that I need money and I have to go through all this rigamarole to get a job,” Richard groaned, “In fact I don’t know why you aren’t doing all this too.”

“I just haven’t found the right thing yet. I don’t see the point in going to college or trade school or whatever training needs to be done if I don’t want to do that thing. It seems like a waste of my time and money,” Wyatt proclaimed.

“I guess you have a point,” Richard remarked, “although you probably should think about your future a bit more.”

“Whatever.”
The two young men had been walking the same loop for about an hour now and had just gotten to the point where they were finding it boring. They began to walk towards town, talking about this, that, nonsense, and whatnot. They had about an hour and a half before either of them had to go anywhere so they were just taking their time and enjoying life. They were just on the topic of what the greatest Beatles album is and they were in such a debate that they didn’t notice the large man that had been standing on the sidewalk, right in their path.

“Watch where you are going, private!” yelled the very large man. It was at this moment that the two young men looked up to find they had just run into a military general. What makes it worse is that he was in the middle of a big spiel to get people to join the army. There was a crowd of around fifty people who were all intently watching to see what this big tough general was going to do to these two small relatively weak looking boys.

“Are you two so intent on enrolling that you couldn’t even wait until the end my presentation?” The General asked very loudly. The Richard and Wyatt looked at eachother with scared expressions, and in unison they both mouthed the word “crap”.

“Well are you?” The General boomed.

“Well… no…? I was, well, we were just- “ Richard managed to stammer out.

“You were just what?” The General asked.

“We were just talking about… um… our great friend Sgt. Pepper,” Wyatt exclaimed. He was very happy with himself for that one.

“Sgt. who-now?” The General questioned.

“Have you not heard of Sgt. Pepper?” Richard chimed in. This made a few people in the audience laugh. In fact there was an even larger crowd forming to see what all the commotion is.

“Sgt. Pepper? Is that some kind of joke?” The General shouted, silencing the few people that were laughing. “DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!?” He bellowed so loud it woke up the deaf people three towns over. He had said this with so much force, and so much spit, that Wyatt and Richard nearly fell backwards into the puddle of spit that was forming.

“Well… No...” Wyatt mumbled, “Who are you?”
There was silence for a few seconds. Everyone was in shock, their ears stung. Nobody dared say a word. The people who had just walked over to see what all the commotion was were now very sorry they had come. The people who happened to be walking on the same street were upset they woke up this morning. The very bright and sunny day seemed a bit darker now. Finally a voice came, a voice that made everyone wonder if they had just lost their good hearing.

“I’m General Pepper,” The General said in the most normal voice he used all day, “I haven’t been Sgt. Pepper for a long time… I think it was nineteen sixty-something… Never mind that though, I’m curious how you young ones would know about me.”

“There’s this album-” Richard began before Wyatt punched him in the ribs, cutting him off.

“We learned it in School,” Wyatt quickly covered up, “You were great in that one war…” he trailed off.

“Well, enough about me,” General Pepper began, “I’m assuming you two want to enlist right? Why else would you be here.”

“You see about that…” Wyatt started but never finished.

“I have already got my next four years figured out sir, my mom would hate it if I changed my mind now.” Richard said proudly.

“That’s fine, although we could really use someone like you,” General Pepper said sounding a little disappointed, “Now what about you, young man,” He said addressing Wyatt, “How about joining the greatest army on earth?”

“Well…um… I have a plan too,” Wyatt lied.

“Really, is there any chance I can change your mind on that? I think you should strongly consider joining the military. You two were some of the few that have stood before me and not run away when I start shouting.” General Pepper exclaimed, chuckling a bit. He had a hearty chuckle, and he seemed much more human and almost enjoyable now. It was hard to believe that a minute ago he almost broke the world record for world’s loudest shout.

“I’m good,” Wyatt stammered. He was getting rather flustered now at General Pepper’s persistence.

“I really think you should reconsider.” The General said, shoving a pamphlet into Wyatt’s face.
“And I really think that I am good,” Wyatt repeated, attempting to push back the pamphlet but failing due to the General’s strength. “How can this guy be this strong.” Wyatt thought, “He’s like 93 years old”.

“Just look at the pamphlet,” The General persisted, “Think of all the benefits you would get.”

Wyatt took the pamphlet, flipped through it without actually reading anything and passed it back saying, “Yeah, I think I am still good. I have to get going anyway.” He then looked over at Richard and motioned with his head for him to follow. As he began walking however, he felt a huge hand on his shoulder.

“I just want you to seriously consider this. I can tell you don’t really know what to do, and we need men like you.” General Pepper said, almost in a creepy tone.

“I’ll think about it,” Wyatt replied in a tone suggesting he wasn’t actually going to think about it. He then shrugged the General’s hand off his shoulder and walked away.

“That was, interesting,” Richard said after a while.

“I’ll say,” replied Wyatt, “I was scared for my life at times.”

“That general had a point though, you don’t really know what you are doing.”

“I don’t and I don’t care. There is so much to do in life, why settle for one thing?”

“Because that is what is expected of you.”

“So, why should I do something just because it is deemed socially necessary? I think it’s all stupid, made up bullcrap from rich people to get my money.”

“It may be that, but you don’t have much of a choice anymore.”

“I have all the choice in the world. I can do what I want!”

“Ok…”

There was an awkward silence after that. It was ten minutes before either of them decided to talk, but when they began again they talked about normal, unimportant stuff. Stuff like “Why is the sky blue?” and “Was the colour orange named after the fruit, or was the fruit named after the colour?” The type of stuff that most people inevitably start talking about in the middle of a small town at 3 in the afternoon. They also talked about what they wanted to do and eventually settled on ice cream. They continued walking and talking, having a merry old time, until they were interrupted by a businessman who was shouting in the middle of the sidewalk.
“I AM THE REASON YOU GOT THIS JOB, AND I CAN BE THE REASON YOU LOSE IT!” The businessman shouted, at what seemed like the two men. This made both of them think, but not in the same way.

Richard was thinking, “I don’t even have a job”. Whereas Wyatt was thinking, “How many people can shout at us on this sidewalk in one day?”

The man then continued, “YES, I KNOW YOU HAVE PEOPLE TO FEED, BUT IF THEY ARE AS BAD AS YOU THEN THEY DESERVE TO STARVE!”

This made Richard and Wyatt very uncomfortable as you can only take so many strangers yelling at you in a day. Especially in such a negative attitude.

“You SIR, ARE FIRED! YOU HEAR THAT? F-TO-THE-I-TO-THE-R-E-D! I NEVER WANT TO HEAR YOUR STUPID VOICE AGAIN!” The man was practically screaming at this point. Wyatt began walking the other way, although Richard stopped him because the ice cream store was on the other side of the screaming businessman and nothing was going to stop him from his sweet treat. Not even screaming businessmen firing them from non-existent jobs.

“Sorry about that,” came a voice that sounded vaguely familiar but less harsh, “My co worker- well, ex-co worker- is a bit hard to deal with.”

“It’s fine,” Wyatt said by habit, not realizing who he was talking to.

“Anyway… Hi! My name is Carl. Carl Mann, of He’s The Mann Talent Agency. I used to work with a guy named Charlie He, but that didn’t work, so now I’ve got to find a new partner,” His voice was thin and a bit raspy from yelling. His sudden change in personality had scarred the two men speechless, except for a little “wow” from Wyatt. “You two wouldn’t happen to know anybody would you?” the man continued, “In fact, would either of you happen to have a business degree?”

Richard had already gone through this once so he started his whole spiel about how he already has a plan for his life and his mom would kill him if he changed it now. His little lecture took maybe around 5 minutes and had made everyone who was witness to it nearly pass out with boredom. When he got done he looked around with a proud look on his face, almost like he enjoyed putting people to sleep.

When the businessman woke up, he then turned to Wyatt because there was obviously no future with the other guy. “So, uhh, what are your plans for the future?” he questioned cautiously.
“Well... you see... I... um... I was going to start my own career in... gosh... the...” Wyatt managed to fumble out. He looked around for something to give him an idea for a job. Unfortunately, all he saw was the He’s The Mann Talent Agency pin on Carl’s shirt. “I was going to go into the talent agency business,” he blurted out. Unaware of his huge mistake, Wyatt looked pretty proud for a minute. Richard facepalmed and began wishing he had stayed home to play video games.

“Really?” Carl asked, surprised at his luck, “How coincidental? I need a partner and I work in the talent agency business. You wouldn’t happen to have a business degree, would you? My partner was the one who handled all the business, and so I am stuck as a talent scout with no business. Can you start right now?”

“Well, about that. I don’t have a degree. In fact I haven’t even gone to college yet.” Wyatt said, hoping to get out of this quickly and easily.

“Go get a degree then! I’ll wait. Here, I have a few pamphlets for colleges in the area. I’ll start lining up talent and then when you come in then we can start business. I have enough savings to get me by for a few years. Go! If you start now then we could maybe have a business that is self sustainable in 10 years. Go on, get yourself enrolled. Oh! Here’s my business card, so you can contact me. See you in for years!” Carl practically shoved him away as he said this. He then continued shouting “I’ll wait!” and “Go on now, I believe in you!” until the boys were about three hundred feet away, then he went back to talking on his earpiece.

“You attract the weirdest people,” Richard proclaimed as soon as he was sure that they were far enough away.

“No, I’m pretty sure it’s you,” replied Wyatt, “I never get shouted at when I am by myself.”

“Still it’s been a weird day,” said Richard.

“It sure has,” Wyatt agreed, “I don’t know if I have had that many people yell at me in a week before, let alone a day.”

“Yeah, let’s not run into any other weirdos like that again.”

“We can try,” Wyatt responded, “In fact let’s go back into the suburbs, there’s a noise ordinance there so we can’t possibly be yelled at.”

“Not a bad idea for a military talent agent,” Richard joked.
“Yeah, shut up!” Wyatt retorted as they began walking towards the suburbs. It was a truly beautiful part of town, with the nice looking cookie cutter houses and the gorgeously upkept lawns. The trees all looked nice and there was never any litter or junk in people’s lawns. Everyone had a nice new car parked in their driveway and almost all the houses were decorated for the nearest holiday. It was truly a joy to walk through here especially because there was never any crime and you never had to fear the people because they were all nice middle to upper class people. They began talking about things and stuff again and were enjoying their time immensely. As they went along they passed a man standing on top of a house. Puzzled by it, they stopped and stared for a while. They deducted that it was a roof worker putting shingles on the roof of this house. They still stayed to watch, because the work seemed almost mesmerizing. Eventually the worker dropped his hammer, and after cursing to himself for a bit, decided to go down and retrieve it. Wyatt, being the nice person he tries to be, had already picked it up and was halfway up the ladder before the roof worker noticed him.

“Hey, do you need this?” Wyatt asked cautiously, trying to not scare the man off the roof.

“I kind of do,” the worker replied snarkily, “Normally, I have someone else to do that but I don’t have my usual help today.

“Well that sucks,” Wyatt said as he passed the hammer,” What happened to your helper?”

“I don’t know,” the roofman replied, “He just hasn’t shown up the past few days.”

“Well that sucks,”Wyatt repeated, not knowing what else to say.

“You wouldn’t happen to know anybody would you?” the roofer asked innocently.

“No, I don’t actually. And no, I won’t consider going to trade school to learn contracting.” Wyatt almost yelled, being afraid of the same thing happening thrice.

“I hadn’t even thought of having you trained up to be my assistant,” the roof man replied. Wyatt facepalmed. “Here, is a card for the nearest school. I know it will be a couple years before you are ready, but I can get you a spot in my business if you’d like.”

“I think I am good.” Wyatt said for the fourth time today, “ In fact, I think I am done. I am done with all this crap. I want to go die in a hole somewhere so I don’t have to worry about my fricken future. You can keep your stupid card and I will keep my stupid life. Good day sir!”
“Have a nice day you two.” the roofer mumbled, a little scarred by Wyatt’s outburst.

“You too,” Richard answered. Trying to make up for his friend’s rudeness. They then walked away, and down the road for a bit. Once they got to the edge of the suburbs, Richard finally spoke up again, “Hey, are you doing alright?”

“Not particularly, why?”

“You seem a little tense,” Richard replied with a huge understatement. If he was being honest he would have said, “you seem hotter than the sun,” or “I can’t believe that vein in your forehead hasn’t burst yet.”

“It’s just, I don’t want to have to worry about my future. I just want to enjoy being young while I can,” Wyatt complained.

‘I’m with you, let’s just go to the park again,” Richard consoled. They would have gone to the park too, if it weren’t for the giant billboard that was right in their way advertising a local college. At the first sight of this, Wyatt broke down and cried.

“I don’t understand why this is all so important. I don’t know what I am doing! I am lost!” cried Wyatt,"Life is dumb, everything is setup to be a social standard. You can’t do anything and not be judged for it. Why don’t I just die now, it would save both me and everyone else a lot of pain. There is no meaning of life! Life is pain and you never know enough about it to heal your wounds. I don’t know what I am doing! There is too much to do even though we are stuck on this sad sack of a planet for so short of time! I just want to die! I don’t know how to move forwards, I don’t know how to do anything. I’m trapped! I don’t know what to do!”

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” Richard comforted his friend, “Do you want to know a secret about life?”

Wyatt just looked at him, with tears rolling down his face. He finally managed to nod, and whimper a little “yes”.

The words that Richard had spoken struck deep within Wyatt. It put life into a bit of context and helped him regain his confidence. The words the Richard said are one of the secrets of life that make everything seem a bit less intimidating. They make you feel more confident in yourself by the knowledge of others. It’s a general rule of life, that maybe not everyone knows but is quite evident when you hear it. The words that Richard said were, “No one knows what they are doing”. 
Wyatt felt much better after that. Something about not being alone in not knowing what is going on made him feel like he could keep going on. He allowed himself to wipe the tears from his face and move on. They went back to the park and enjoyed their last 10 minutes together in childlike bliss. It was like nothing had happened between when they left the park and when they came back.

Eventually the clock struck four and their rides appeared in the parking lot. The two young men said their goodbyes and Wyatt thanked his friend for his immense help. Wyatt was finally feeling good about life. He was ready to take on whatever was thrown at him. At least he was, until he got in the car and his mother asked, “Hey, what college did you want to go to again? I need to do the paperwork this week.”

The End.

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