

Bankrupt.

The man was thinking, "Friendships seem like transactions."

He wanted to talk to someone; he didn't want to burden his friends, and he believed the cost of participating in society was too high for him.

He knew it wasn't them or him; the initial transactions in his young life had left him afraid and uninterested in people and friendships.

It was as if he went into society sunburned, yet people slapped him. He asked them not to do that because it hurt, but they laughed and did it again, even harder, while laughing at his pain.

As a child, he noticed he preferred not to be around others, and while he tried to nurture his ability to be friendly, it was already too late. Predators had stolen his ability to barter, and he went through life believing that unless he gave up everything others wanted, his value to them was zero.

The man said to people, "Here, this is my story. It is who I am. Am I okay for you?" He asked that question during transactions, but at times, he would whisper because he feared hearing their answer. Others heard him but didn't answer.

He finally stopped asking people into his life because inviting people only allowed them to witness his lack of engagement. Luckily for him, several people in his life were not transactional. Or, maybe they were transactional, but those transactions seem to be lifelong.

The man loved and was loved. The man loves now, and he believes there are those who love him. So, while the man wants to reach out, he won't. He can't. In all transactions, both sides

must give their fair share. The totality of his life has left him feeling bankrupt, but only as far as society is concerned. He doesn't feel bankrupt toward his friends, the trees, the sky, or the myriad animals he has come to know. He believes that the things he loves seeing love to see him, too.

He is bankrupt with society, and society only, but he is rich with optimism and happiness, which seem to spring from a well deep within him and over which he has no control. So he sits, happy and optimistic, no longer needing to participate in the society surrounding him.

Written by Peter Skeels © 11-23-2024