

My Choice.

The man wasn't sure how he was feeling today. A person he had met seven plus years ago as a transaction, someone who would rent a trailer from him, had become more than that. It's true the guy was awkward to be around, suffered from anxiety, was reclusive to the point of bursts of anger when not left alone, but at other times, when he needed something, was charming. This made it easier to like him but also to dislike him.

The man had never liked people who pretended to be his friend but were only after what they could get from him. And the man had sincerely thought some people were his friends, only to find that once they no longer needed him, he became an acquaintance. The friendly texts, the visits, and the invites all stopped.

The man accepted his renter as the rough-edged character that he was. Months passed, then a year, and soon five years had passed. There were happy times, a few arguments that required cooling-off time, and, through it all, caring grew in the man towards his renter. For instance, the man didn't raise the rent as he could have. The yearly inspections of the rental property caused his renter so much anxiety, despite the man always finding the rental in good condition, that he stopped doing them.

The man had come to like his tenant and wanted to make his life nicer. He paid the rent on time and kept to himself most of the time. The man kept to himself most of the time, and a type of harmony pervaded their friendship. Neither man seemed to notice the harmony, so there was no public acknowledgement. The renter would often say that he didn't know how he would survive in his rural home without the man, and indeed, without the man, the renter couldn't and wouldn't. The renter benefited from the man's snowplow in winter and his generator during power outages. It was a bond built initially on necessity that turned into a friendship.

After a certain age, usually seventy, each subsequent year seems to age people more. The man laughed as he thought that when he was in his thirties, a year was a year. But now, having reached seventy, a year seemed to age him much more than that. And the injuries he used to get that would heal and disappear now seemed to linger and to still be bothering him when new injuries happened, thus compounding the state of his health. But he wasn't the only one experiencing that phenomenon; his renter was too.

It was now eight years that the men had known each other when the renter got badly hurt in a car crash. His release seemed unusually quick to the man, but he laughed because he knew little about injuries. After three days, the man checked on the renter only to find him unconscious on the floor. His breathing was heavy. He was unconscious, and his hands were cold. He held the renter's cold hand and, raising his voice, he let him know he was there and he'd help him.

The man stopped remembering that story and reflected on an experience from today. He had gotten frustrated by a person he knew, who told him about something he already knew, knew well, and knew more about than they did. But the person had launched into telling him and couldn't hear him because they didn't stop talking. When they finally stopped talking and heard the frustration in his voice, the person whom he had known for over two years told him she talked like that to everyone. The man realized the deeper reason he was upset was that he felt the person should know him by now. That's what upset him; he wasn't everyone. In fact, he had never met anyone like himself because there wasn't anyone like him. He didn't have many friends, and he didn't want many friends because they took up too much time. He expected the friends he had to know him and treat him as if they knew him. If not, they were acquaintances, which was fine too. The difference between a friend and an acquaintance was loyalty.

Written by Peter Skeels © 7-2-2026