

Ol' Magic Feet

He sat in the corner of the hostel, sipping his tea, crunching on a biscuit. How had he come to this? Homeless and unrecognised in a sea of lost people. We'll call him Bert. There are a lot of people like Bert if you look closely enough.

He had gone to the hostel because the Podiatrists were coming today from the Crisis at Christmas group and he was looking forward to getting some help. His feet were dry, cracked and bleeding. His heels were sore, his socks were holey and his shoes didn't fit. He had found them in a bin outside a gym and as they were drier than his old shoes he put them on.

And boy did his feet smell. He had last had a shower on Christmas Eve at the hostel the previous year and had only soaked his feet in a river since then to cool them down on a hot day last summer.

It was soon Bert's turn. After his shower he got some warm dry clothes and a man came to help give him a warm soapy footbath. His feet were dried and when they were ready he saw the Podiatrist.

The Podiatrist was very careful to treat Bert's feet knowing how painful they were. He sprayed Bert's feet with a cool antiseptic spray and then trimmed and cleared his nails, removed his hard skin and dressed the wounds. When he was finished he rubbed in a cream to stop Bert's feet from drying out. As Bert was about to leave he said how relieved he was and how his feet were more comfortable. The Podiatrist made sure that Bert got some new woolly socks (it was cold outside) and a pair of boots with new soles and heels. Bert said "This reminds me of when I was a young boy, when my mother used to dress me".

"Can you manage yourself Bert", said the Podiatrist, trying not to upset him. "No, please help me. I had injured my back in the war" he said "and can't bend too easily". "I was a runner before I came to this sad end" he continued "I was quite famous in my day, they used to call me Ol' Magic Feet, because I could run really fast and nobody could catch me". "I even won some races as a young man in my army days, but the war came and I was sent overseas". Not wishing to interrupt the man the helpers encouraged him to tell his story.

"I was sent to France first. I was a runner between groups taking messages to the commanders. It was so muddy the lorries and jeeps got stuck and the horses couldn't manage either. So I was sent and always got through". Bert had some more tea and biscuits. "Then I went to North Africa, the sand was difficult so again they sent for Ol' Magic Feet to run for them I did, and always got through the lines".

"When the war ended I came home but had an accident, I slipped and fell while carrying a heavy box of goods. I couldn't work after that and drifted from place to place".

"Where's home?" said the Podiatrist, "Manchester" said Bert. He was a long way from home but Ol' Magic Feet was able to go on his way a lot more comfortably than before. "See you next year and Thanks again," said Bert.

Professor Pod says “ Working as a Podiatrist can be very rewarding as nearly all of the patients they see are, like Bert, very grateful for your help”