

The ticket inspector

After this story was on the BBC, several people wrote in with their stories about being helped by strangers.



I was living in a student flat in North London, when the police knocked on my door one night. I thought it was because I hadn't paid the rent for a few months, so I didn't open the door. But then I wondered if it was something to do with my mother, who I knew wasn't very well. There was no phone in the flat and this was before the days of mobile phones, so I ran down to the nearest phone box and phoned my dad in Leeds, in the north of England. He told me that my mum was very ill in hospital and that I should go home as soon as I could.

When I got to the station I found that I'd missed the last train to Leeds. There was a train to Peterborough, from where some local trains went to Leeds, but I would miss the connection by about 20 minutes. I decided to get the Peterborough train – I was so desperate to get home that I thought maybe I could hitchhike from Peterborough.

'Tickets, please.' I looked up and saw the ticket inspector. He could see from my eyes that I'd been crying. 'Are you OK?' he asked. 'Of course I'm OK,' I said. 'You look awful,' he continued. 'Is there anything I can do?' 'You could go away,' I said rudely.

But he didn't. He sat down and said 'If there's a problem, I'm here to help'. The only thing I could think of was to tell him my story. When I finished I said, 'So now you know. I'm a bit upset and I don't feel like talking any more, OK?' 'OK,' he said, finally getting up. 'I'm sorry to hear that, son. I hope you make it home.'



I continued to look out of the window at the dark countryside. Ten minutes later, the ticket inspector came back.

The students



I was living in South Korea at the time, teaching English. I had to leave the country and return again because of problems with my visa, so I booked a ferry to Fukuoka in Japan. I intended to change some Korean money into Japanese yen when I got there, but when I arrived I discovered it was a holiday in Japan and all the banks were closed. I didn't have a credit card, so I walked from the ferry terminal towards the town wondering what I was going to do without any Japanese money. I was feeling lonely and depressed when suddenly I heard a young couple speaking French. I asked them if they spoke any English, and they told me (in good English) that they were Belgian students. When I explained my problem, they immediately offered to take me around the city and look for somewhere where I could change money. They paid for my bus ticket, and they took me to several places and in the end we found a hotel where I was able to change my cash. They then invited me to join them and their friends for the evening. I had a fantastic night and have never forgotten how they changed all their plans just to help a stranger.

– Karina

