It was a rainy Tuesday morning when I met the strangest stranger I've ever met. I was on my usual commute to school, half-asleep and already dreading the day ahead. As I hurried to the subway platform, I slipped on a puddle and went sliding toward the edge. Just as I was about to become an unfortunate statistic, a hand shot out and grabbed my arm, pulling me back to safety.

"Careful there!" a cheerful voice said. I looked up to see a man in a bright yellow raincoat that was at least three sizes too big. He had a wild mop of curly hair, round glasses that seemed perpetually fogged up, and a smile that looked like it was powered by caffeine and sunshine.

"Thanks," I mumbled, trying to regain my composure and some semblance of dignity.

"No problem at all! Name's Gerald," he said, shaking my hand with a Vigor that could have powered a small village.

"nice to meet you, Gerald. I'm Tawana," I replied, wondering why he was so chipper at this ungodly hour.

"Tawana, let me tell you something," he said, leaning in conspiratorially. "I've discovered the secret to life."

 "Oh? And what's that?" I asked, more out of obligation than curiosity.

"Rubber chickens," he whispered.

I blinked. "Rubber chickens?"

He nodded emphatically. "Rubber chickens, my friend. They are the secret to a happy life. Whenever things get too serious, just pull out a rubber chicken and give it a squeeze. It's the embodiment of joy!"

 Gerald pulled a rubber chicken out of his oversized raincoat and squeezed it. It let out a ridiculous squawk that echoed through the subway station, turning heads and causing a few people to chuckle.

I couldn't help it. I laughed. A real, honest-to-God laugh that shook off some of the morning gloom.

"See?" Gerald said, beaming. "You just needed a rubber chicken in your life."

I never saw Gerald again, but to this day, I keep a rubber chicken in my desk drawer at school. And whenever I'm having a bad day, I give it a squeeze. Turns out, Gerald was right. Sometimes, all you need is a rubber chicken to make life a little brighter