

The Cautious Owl

DJ Kane

There's a story I've not told anyone, nor should have, for good reasons. For many years, this story, or as some suggest a legend, remains hard to believe even by me, who was a beneficiary of it. It was at a time I had decided I would venture alone deep inside a forest dark and unfamiliar to me, a true stretch to my wisdom and common sense, something I would have never done, but did to satisfy my curiosity, about an untrue story or a true legend.

I gathered bottles of water, crackers, and a jar of peanut butter and jelly, and a light jacket, but leaving out any smart itinerary, or common sense. I was not familiar with, nor did I have any backup plan, if anything had gone wrong. What could go wrong? I'm only spending a little time in the woods, among small animals, which call the forest home. That question, was the first thing gone wrong.

A friend, living in Farmingdale, New Jersey, had owned the land, where I was planning to visit; he and his family had raised chickens, and marketed eggs in New York City. I was going to satisfy my curiosity as the legend was his families, and I was invited to partake.

I drove up to the property, and entered the driveway driving between two very large steel wagon wheels, one could say, they were much exaggerated in size, dwarfing my car. I continued down the dirt road, featuring the main house, and corncrib on my left, which housed food for his 10, 000 chickens, and three horses. On my right, was a corral and barn housing his horses, and sided by a clear, drinkable running brook, and before reaching the forest, a massive chicken coops had come into full view. I was now at my destination, where I had parked to venture beyond. I gathered up my stuff, exited my car and proceeded.

As I first stepped under the canopy above, it seemed to be closing swiftly with every step I had taken, as I ventured further and deeper. Darkening above, preventing the once streaming sunlight that seemed to be so visible, and plentiful, and now ungenerous in it's offering. The deeper I ventured, the more posted signs were on trees. There were signs warning of, Dangers Beyond This Point. and Proceed at Your Own Risk. There were more than one time I had asked myself, as I traveled further in, "Why?" and "Why alone?" Each time I had asked, I would come up with no logical explanation that had made any common sense, for me to be there at all. There just wasn't any.

After about three hours into my adventure, I came across what seemed to be banded railroad tracks, which displayed signs on both sides of the tracks, Warning, Danger, Do Not Cross RR Crossing, and Abandoned RR.

Of course, after reading the many signs of caution, I proceeded to cross, deciding to enjoy my lunch, sitting on the abandon track, basking in the newfound sunlight, which had

engrossed the tracks, rendering them and me some abandoned life they once had enjoyed, and I would share.

I sat down on the tracks; opened my jar of peanut butter and jelly, crackers, and dug in. This isn't so bad after all I thought, as I opened a bottle of water, which was quite warm to the taste.

Suddenly, without any warning, and with a sudden roar, roughness, and vibration, the wheels of an oncoming train, seemed to suddenly appear, startling me. The tracks started their ritual dance, of days gone by, rattling, clinging, and stretching, as I hastily gathered my eats to make way, to a side of the track for my safety. As the train began to pass, I watched with amazement and awe as this abandoned track, was about to be used again.

The train passed at a slow and solemn pace, its windows covered with purple drapes, and in between each car were trainmen, fully dressed in black. Neither trainman acknowledging me, as if I hadn't existed, or had they? Was that the secret, a train filled with the dead, making its way on this abandoned track to somewhere or someplace?

I now decided, it was time for me to be on my way, to avoid any other surprises, this was enough for me, I could always return, with someone else. I looked up at the treetops for a landmark, to get my bearings, and begin my escape.

Looking up I had noticed a huge white Owl perched high on a limb, which seemed to be watching every move, I had been making. Looking up at him, raising my hands in desperation, I yelled out, "Mr. Owl, if you know the direction I should take, advise me, otherwise, just fly away!" Not expecting response, I was amazed when the Owl immediately took flight, not away, but to a much lower branch, landed and spoke, "Human, you have interfered in the circle of life". That train has been depositing souls, without any worldly interference, up to this point."

I stood dumbfounded at the whole situation, and asked, " Since this concerns, humans and "the circle of life", what is a talking Owl doing here?"

"First of all Human, be ever watchful of the questions you ask, and the tone you use. I do not appreciate trick questions or attitude. You should also keep in mind, you are not sitting in the safety of your car, and next, I have been selected, to watch over the trains, from humans like you, who interfere. It also promises me lifetime employment, and you know how that can be."

Instead of calling me Human, Mr. Owl, wouldn't you want to call me by my name?"

"No I don't, Human, now lets get you on your way."

The Owl fluttered his feathers and a blue bird flew between us depositing seeds on the ground.

The Owl directed the blue bird to show me the way to my car, and directed me to follow the seeds the blue bird would drop on his way.

I then responded, "Just like Hansel and Gretel, Mr. Owl."

His response was quick and direct." What did I tell you Human, you will see all in good time?"

"Okay, Mr. Owl," I replied as I gathered my belongings and followed the blue bird as he flew high to the top of the forest canopy, dropping his seeds in flight. As the seeds fell to the forest floor, a glow appeared illuminating a path for me to follow. Following the path I did not always feel alone. Being watched from above and the forest floor I believed, as giggles and laughter and rustling of leaves, transformed the once silence of the forest to be entertaining to me as I followed the glow, as I made my way to the forest exit, to fetch my car as the Owl promised me.

I could tell half a story as you have heard, or return to capture the full legend, which I hope to do in the future, accompanied of course.