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Story #1: **Life Is Like A Cup of Coffee**

Author Unknown



A group of alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life.

Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups - porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite - telling them to help themselves to the coffee.

When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said:

"If you noticed, all the nice looking expensive cups have been taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress.

Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases it is just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups... And then you began eying each others' cups.

Now consider this: Life is the coffee. The jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain Life, and the type of cup we have does not define, nor change the quality of life we live.

Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee. Savor the coffee, not the cups! The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything."

Story #2

Good Things Come In Large Packages

By Brenda Barnhart



Jacob was a stoutly boy, with round features through and through, including his eyes which glowed almost neon blue from round granite spheres. He accepted his roundness, for after all, good things come in large packages, or so his mother always told him, with a funny grin on her lips. He never understood the grin, but took it to mean it was their little secret, that the world had yet to learn this, and Jacob was the one to teach them.

On this warm Sunday morning, he sits in the coffee shop awaiting his food. His platter, really, for Jacob was a boy with a ferocious appetite and he fed this appetite lovingly. “SEVEN egg omelet with half a pound of cheese...” said the waitress as she dropped the plate to the table, rolling her eyes in amazement at this boys order. ‘This poor boy,’ she thought to herself, ‘what have his parents done to cause such low self esteem.’ Jacob dug into his food immediately and rather seriously, as if feeding a hunger that never rested.

Jacob watched silently out the window after he finished his feast, lost in thoughts of his future, of becoming something special and showing the world what love really is. He didn’t know how he was going to do this, but he knew, from the depths of his soul, that this was his mission in life, and he looked forward to it with an excitement that made any Christmas morning celebration look like a Sunday at church.

But this morning, however, something was different. Jacob thought about his future with a new sense of melancholy that he could not explain. He felt as if something was going to happen very soon that would catapult him into his purpose, and he wasn’t sure he was ready. He was processing his thoughts, analyzing his feelings when a sudden bang brought him back to his seat at the booth, once again aware of his surroundings.

He looked around for the source of the interruption to his thoughts, and saw people gathered around something on the floor. At closer examination he saw it was a body, very pale and thin and had sores on his face. You could see his skeletal structure he was so thin. People were frantic, but no one wanted to assist the man lying on the floor. “He has AIDS!” someone yelled, “don’t touch him! You’ll surely catch it!”

Jacob got up and walked over to the man, knelt down and felt for a pulse. An older woman tried to stop him but he paid no attention. “He’s got a pulse!” he said, “He’s still alive. Call 9-1-1, NOW! Hurry!” he screamed as he began to perform CPR. People gasped in horror as they watched this large boy press his mouth against this sick man. He continued the CPR until the ambulance arrived, and he kept him alive.

As Jacob started his walk home, he heard whispers fading behind him as folks continued to talk about him with disbelief at what he’d done. “That wasn’t brave!” said one man, “it was purely idiotic!” Jacob just shook his head as he walked away, lost in his own thoughts of what had just occurred. He was a hero, regardless of what that man was ill from, but that didn’t matter. Jacob didn’t care about that. His melancholy had grown still without recognition as to its source, and this is what Jacob was deeply contemplating when the truck hit him. He never heard it coming. Total blackness ensued... and very soon after, death.

By this time news had gone around about what Jacob had done at the diner. The news reporters were at the diner the moment Jacob was hit a few miles down the road. The story of the year for this small town. The headlines the next morning read,

“TWISTED FATE: Cancer patient collapses at Mel’s Diner, and a young boy saves his life, only to die moments later”. The story ended noting that the cancer patient was in remission, and collapsed due to food lodged in his throat and no one noticed his struggles for breath. This man was a father of three young babies.

Three young babies, who will grow up with their father; their father, who will live to see his babies grow up. All because of the selfless love of a young boy. A young boy in a large package, with a heart bigger than life could contain.

Story #3

A Buddha Is Among You

Author Unknown



The abbot of a once famous Buddhist monastery that had fallen into decline became deeply troubled. Monks were lax in their practice, novices were leaving and lay supporters deserting to other centers. The abbot traveled far to a sage and recounted his tale of woe, of how much he desired to transform his monastery to the flourishing haven it had been in days of yore.

The sage looked him in the eye and said, "The reason your monastery has languished is that the Buddha is living among you in disguise, and you have not honored him." The abbot hurried back, his mind in turmoil.

The Selfless One was at his monastery! Who could he be? Brother Hua? No, he was full of sloth. Brother Po? No, he was too dull. But then the Tathagata was in disguise. What better disguise than sloth or stupidity? He called his monks to him and revealed the sage's words. They, too, were taken aback and looked at each other with suspicion and awe.

Which one of them was the Chosen One?

The disguise was perfect. Not knowing who he was they took to treating everyone with the respect due to a Buddha. Their faces started shining with an inner radiance that attracted novices and then lay supporters.

In no time at all, the monastery far surpassed its previous glory.

Story #4

Dropping a Shoe

By Serge Danilov



The caterpillar wasn't happy. The leaves on his tree were half-wilted, brownish, and tasted like they looked. The weather was cold and windy, and he didn't like it at all. And for whatever feathery reason, the neighborhood birds seemed to frequent his particular tree much more than all the other trees combined, so even on a sunny day he could not stretch his forty fuzzy feet, turn his belly towards the sun, and get himself some dark-green tan. In fact, with all the nature against him, he felt miserable and sorry for himself.

But one day the caterpillar woke up with a vague but strangely pleasant feeling. Something wonderful stirred inside him, and as he grabbed onto that feeling, he decided that starting today he will not feel sorry for himself. No, sir, he will not. He will feel good about himself, no matter what the weather is, or how threatening the birds are, or how wilted the leaves.

The days went by and he realized that these things were not bothering him as much as they did before. And it felt good. No, no, scratch that, not just good. He felt exhilarated. He felt full of energy. He felt safe even when birds were flapping their wings just a couple of branches away. The leaves seemed a lot greener and juicier than usual, and the weather warmer than yesterday. He felt good about his body. He was neither too thin nor too fat—just perfect. He felt expansive. His vision became so incredibly clear, as if a muddy film came off his eyes. And he sensed some sort of electric-like buzzing in his flexible long body which, frankly, felt quite good.

At first he thought he was going nuts... maybe some hormonal imbalance or something. But somehow it all felt like it was supposed to be this way. There was just one teeny problem. There was a tiny anxiousness in the caterpillar's heart. Things were all just too good now—the abundant food, the newly found safety, the happiness which somehow felt natural—and the overall great way he felt about himself. Somewhere in the back of his tail there was a feeling that this paradise could not last forever. A shoe was going to

drop. He didn't know which shoe, and where it was going to drop, but he positively felt that it will drop. And he was apprehensive. Just a little bit.

As he was dozing off in the sun after enjoying a plump leaf, a strange creature appeared next to him out of nowhere. She had a body like his, but more shapely and adorned with colors, and two brilliant wings attached to that body. The creature was breathtaking. The caterpillar's jaw dropped and a small piece of the leaf fell out. The creature opened her perfectly shaped mouth and said, "How are you feeling, dear Caterpillar?"

Her voice was so melodious that the caterpillar became positively enchanted. He pinched himself to snap out of it and said, "Ahh, uhmm, eh, well, I'm fine, thank you." He thought a bit and, for some reason feeling an affinity with this creature and that he could trust her, added, "But I have this feeling..." The creature somehow seemed to know his thoughts, as if she was a trained psychologist, because she immediately picked up his sentence, "...of anxiousness? You feel great, but there is some apprehension, like it's all just too good to be true, right? You feel like a shoe is going to drop. Don't you?"

By now the caterpillar gave up on pulling his hanging jaw back up and just covered his mouth to prevent more bits of the leaf from falling out. He mumbled something like "yes," or perhaps it was "maybe," or even "what are you, a destiny's child?"; we can't tell, for it wasn't too clear. But he wanted to know. And finally, excited, in a very loud whisper he asked, letting all the half-chewed pieces of his green lunch fly out of his mouth, "Is it? Is it going to drop?!"

The creature smiled kindly and said, "Yes. It is going to drop." "And then what?!" demanded the caterpillar loudly as if his life depended on the answer. "Oh, you'll see!" said the creature, suddenly lowering her beautiful wings, rising into the air, and flitting away so gracefully like no bird ever could.

He was still thinking about that "You'll see," when a clear liquid started coming out of his mouth, quickly hardening into a thin shiny thread, and he felt a sudden urge to spin it around himself. And as he did, one thought played over and over in his head, "The shoe is dropping! THE SHOE IS DROPPING!!"

But then, all of a sudden, as he very soon found himself suspended in a cocoon, the anxiousness evaporated. Somehow he knew that everything was going to be alright. "So that's what it was all about!" he thought, slipping into a well-deserved sleep. And as he did, a dream began to unfold. He dreamt of strange, beautiful creatures. Creatures with perfect bodies, brilliant wings, and melodious voices. Creatures with freedom to fly.

Story #5

The Obstacles In Our Path

Author Unknown



In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the King for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded.

After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the King indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

The peasant learned what many of us never understand - Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

Story #6

You're Not Who You Think You Are

By Laura Cade



A small chinchilla was walking through a forest of wood scraps when a little bird started singing nearby. He craned his little neck to see who was making this beautiful music, but the bird was nowhere to be seen. He ran up onto a boulder, his little heart pounding so hard that he almost couldn't hear the beautiful music anymore.

Where was that darn bird?! Just then he felt the delicate touch of a feather brush his cheek, so he whirled around in that direction only to find... nothing. The music was getting louder now and the air was obviously being swished around by what must have been wings.

The aggravated chinchilla gave an emphatic sigh as he plopped down onto his rock. As he gave one last glance around, he sat up with a start as his eyes finally made contact with the bird! Ah ha! There she is! He moved slowly over to the bird so as not to scare her away, and peered into her beady little eyes.

"Why have you been hiding from me, Miss Canary?" His mouth opened in rage. "Hey, stop copying me! Would you please stop mimicking every word and move I make?!"

Now he was right up in her face; forget about being polite. "What's the big idea?!"

His nose was right up to hers. "I have half a mind to pluck every fea... TAP!!" went the mirror against his beak as he passed out in fright.

Story #7

Lightning Crashes

By Chris Cade



With a thundering and ominous boom, lightning struck fiercely into the redwood tree nearly splitting it in half. As the rain continued to pour, Mother Eagle knew she had but one chance to save her offspring before the tree would no longer stand. She knew they all had at least another 30 years of life left in them, and she was going to do everything in her power to make that become reality. Even with the tree's promise to stand tall as long as possible, she was not confident that her family would survive this storm.

Mother Eagle knew she had to move her offspring to a safe place, so she flew them one by one to a small nearby cavern where she knew they'd be out of harm's reach. Unfortunately, Mother Eagle was growing old and her talons were not as strong as they used to be, and this ordeal was a significant strain upon her already wavering body.

She returned to the nest for her last little one, Antinanco, and as she was closing her talons upon him, another bolt of lightning struck the tree its final blow. The eagle's nest also split in two from the vibration, Mother Eagle lost her grip, and little Anti plummeted towards the ground.

Without hesitation, Mother Eagle dove down, cutting through the air like a razor, in an attempt to save her littlest, yet oldest child. Fortunately, Mother Eagle gripped him in the nick of time and swooped him away to safety with his other siblings.

For the next few years Mother Eagle taught her offspring how to hunt. It became a necessity now that her beak was crooked, her feathers old and tattered such that they couldn't keep her in flight, and her talons weak and weary. She could no longer hunt. Just as she had taken care of her children, now it was their turn to take care of her. In fact, some of them took care of her for another few decades because she was incapable of doing it herself.

Some of Anti's siblings left their new home to explore the world on their own, and Mother Eagle understood. She saved them on that night knowing that not all would stay. Some had to pave their own path, even if it meant they would die at a young age without their siblings or family to care for them when their own beaks would curve and feathers would wear. Still, it did not matter because when the soul calls from within an eagle, the eagle must respond.

Upon reaching the 40th year of her life, Mother Eagle knew it was finally time to give her life to the Great Spirit. Anti and his few remaining siblings carried Mother Eagle to the highest rock within hundreds of miles and they laid her there to rest. Upon this rock, she knew there would be no food and so she continued to stand proud until she was so weak that her talons could no longer hold her up.

Not long after her body collapsed onto the rock, wings hanging heavily over the sides like wet clothes set out to dry, she took her final breaths. And upon that last exhalation, she saw the green light of compassion emanating from the Great Spirit as it lifted her into the clouds above.

Meanwhile, back at home only Anti and one other remained -- his brother Quidel. As the oldest, Anti's responsibility was to protect all of his siblings just as Mother had done, and Anti had done so with joy and diligence. That is, until another storm came.

Again, the lightning violently struck the tree that he and Quidel were perched upon. Anti knew his brother would be fine though because over the years he had taught him to be prepared for the worst. Anti leapt into the sky knowing Quidel would follow.

But Quidel didn't.

Anti looked back to see Quidel's body split in half and burst into flames in just the same place and way the tree had been. It was a perfect hit, a bull's eye as they say. Anti didn't see this as perfect, but he had no choice except to turn his head and retreat towards safety. All the while, he mourned and wondered why these storms often wrought havok among his family.

Not long passed before Anti's talons became weak and his beak began to curl. His feathers were becoming old and had difficulty sustaining him in flight, and he knew his time was coming just as his mother's had before him. And just like the lightning had split Quidel in two, this new awareness struck fear into Anti's heart more fiercely than anything he had ever experienced before. Simply put, he wasn't ready to die and he knew it!

Of course, what he wanted didn't really matter because his body was telling him it was time. Knowing he had very little time remaining, Anti spent his last energy flying to the same rock where his mother gave her soul to the Great Spirit. He found some solace in knowing that he and his mother will have departed in the same way, from the same place. Unfortunately, he could not make it there. He slowly floated back to the ground because his feathers were so worn that no matter how hard he flapped them, he could not lift off again.

Then an unmistakable vision came into his awareness... he saw himself on the fateful night of Quidel's death. Anti felt trapped in a cone of flame, his body burning to ashes as he saw himself flying away. Anti couldn't understand what this vision was trying to tell him, but he knew it was important. The vision dissipated, and he was left again looking at the sky feeling as though he'd never make it back to the rock for his final meeting with the Great Spirit.

Moments later, a giant bird unlike anything he had ever seen before dove straight at him from miles above. Anti shook his head at the irony because he intended to give himself to the Great Spirit... not to a giant bird. He quickly learned that life does not always turn out as one expects.

The giant bird opened its mouth wide and consumed Anti so entirely that only pitch black remained. To his surprise, Anti saw the light and when his eyes adapted to the new brightness, he found himself staring face to face with giant bird hovering next to him. Looking down, Anti realized he was standing upon the very rock that he had been incapable of reaching on his own. Looking into the giant bird's eyes he knew that he was looking at his brother, Quidel, reborn. Quidel understood that just as he had faced his own death and rebirth, Anti must face his as well. Quidel gave a nod, and like a lightning bolt, he left even more quickly than he had arrived.

Over Anti's last days he became weak and weary, just as his mother did. His talons slowly became weaker and weaker, and his body drooped more and more. His feathers had become so ragged that even if he wanted to fly, even if he had the strength to fly,

they would be unable to hold him in flight.

As Anti slipped in and out of consciousness, he had an incredible vision. An aura of green light surrounded him and the rock he was slouched over and the Great Spirit's presence gave Anti the awareness that his life did not have to be over. His mother did not know this when she left, but there was another way. Then the aura faded, the Great Spirit left, and all that was left was a battered and torn eagle upon a rock in the sky.

Suddenly, Anti knew what had to be done and he mustered up all the strength he had to repeatedly batter his beak against the rock. He did this so fiercely that half of his beak broke off and brought forth the most excruciating pain he had ever known... a pain that reminded him of what Quidel must have felt when he was struck by the lightning.

In this newfound understanding, Anti also realized that he could live for many more days without food. He didn't understand how this was possible or even how he could know this, but it didn't matter because he felt it to the core of his being. During the following days, his beak grew back to its original length, and without the curl it was now sharp and useful again.

He then plucked all of his feathers, one by one, until he had none left. Just like his beak, over many days the feathers grew back in fresh until the final day when Anti pulled upon his last ounces of strength and glided, rather ungracefully, down to the earth where he slowly fed his way back to full health.

Anti lived another several decades and enjoyed raising his own family. He taught his children of the many hunting tricks he knew, of some stunningly beautiful aerial maneuvers, but most of all, he taught them what he had learned about being reborn. He told them the stories of lightning and thunder, of fire and rock, and he passed to them the deep understanding that even when their beaks curled and their feathers could no longer hold them in flight, death was not guaranteed. Antinanco made sure they understood that when this time of life comes they will be faced with the most difficult decision of their entire lives. In this rite of passage, they will have to ask themselves a single question:

"Am I willing to sacrifice all that I am and know myself to be for rebirth into a new life?"

4 Free Spiritual Movies on DVD

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