

Friday, December 16. 2016

## 0.5: Being Heard

Johnny Elbows reminded me of this old series I started a long time ago, and said he would be interested in another entry, so here one is. I've also given it a title now.

Leaving the airport, Jack knew what his next move should be, but he dreaded it, and hated himself for the necessity that compelled him to drive to the Community Center. Parking in the rear of the building, he entered the double doors and squinted through the dim lighting to find Room 13. Pausing for a deep breath, Jack entered the room and took a seat. "and I was just SO ANGRY. I mean, how could she HIDE that from me?" the middle-aged woman finished as Jack took one of the empty seats in the circle. A few people glanced at him as he entered, and a one man even nodded in recognition, but most of the group kept their attention on the speaker. "I gave her everything, worked both of us near to death to GET her in that overrated Boarding School, and then took on a second job to pay their outrageous enrollment fees, and she decides to drop out and tour with that filthy boy and his band? What do I do?" Imploringly, she looked around the circle, seeking advice. Jack put his head in his hands, not wanting to face what he knew was coming. Flashes of cities, stages, tour buses and hotel rooms burst into a spray of color behind his eyes...

The lighting was poor and the carpet was filthy. Jack could smell the combination of sick-up, unwashed teenagers, and illicit drugs. A lamp lay tilted on its side near the door, and EMTs were loading the young blonde on the stretcher. She looked up and made eye contact with Jack.

"Please," she begged. "Please tell my Mom I'm sorry. Her name is Caroline. I don't know why I felt compelled to hurt her...please tell her that I love her."

"Sure thing, kid," one of the EMTs responded. "Now lay back. Everything's going to be fine."

But girl wasn't looking at the EMT - she was looking at Jack. "Tell her, Jack."

Shocked, Jack snapped from the vision, jerking backward in his chair so violently that he tipped over backwards in the metal folding chair, crashing to the floor. Some members of the support group glared at Jack, and he gathered himself from the floor, embarrassed. It must have looked as though he had dozed off - this wasn't his usual group, and he wasn't making a very good impression. Desperate to show he'd been listening, he reseated himself and then looked to the speaker.

"It's going to be OK, Caroline. Remember step 2 - come to believe that a Power greater than us can restore sanity. I know your daughter will be OK - he's watching over her." A few heads around the circle nodded, and the man sitting next to Caroline put an arm around her as tears welled up in her eyes.

"Yes, you're right. Of course. Thank you." Caroline smiled weakly, obviously torn between skepticism and her own desire to believe.

"All right," the man with his arm around Caroline said. "Good share, Caroline. Thank you for letting us in. Let's have our new guest introduce himself."

Jack fidgeted with the pen in his shirt pocket. Getting started was always the hardest part.

"Hello, my name's Jack, and I have an anger problem." A chorus of "Hi, Jack" echoed through the hall. "It's been a rough day - I got fired from my job at the software company I founded 4 years ago, and I'm pretty sure I just disappointed my girlfriend for the last time. She wanted me to meet her parents, but I was too busy getting fired to make it in time. And she's right - I'm always too busy. Deep down inside, I was glad I missed them, and angry with her for trying to force me to meet them before I was ready. That is, until I saw that look on her face." Jack's words faded to silence, and he stared sullenly at the floor.

"Thanks for the share, Jack," the group leader said. When Jack didn't respond, the man continued.

"Today we're discussing Step 10: We continue to take a fearless moral inventory of ourselves, and when we're wrong we promptly admit it. I remember one time..."

The words of the group members faded to a dull buzz in the back of Jack's™ mind. Unbidden, the words of that strange email came back to his mind.

For over four thousand years, I have protected your world from the gibbering madness that lies just beyond the edge of your perception.

Gibbering madness, indeed. Jack was CLEARLY going mad, to be so focused on such an obvious prank as his entire life fell apart around him. He noticed the meeting was wrapping up, and he robotically stood and helped put away the chairs, then took a donut and paper cup of milk from the folding table in the corner. He was so wrapped up in his thoughts, it took several minutes to notice the small, dark-skinned man standing next to him, staring intently.

“Hi,” Jack started to say, but the man cut him off.

“Eeeoo have never been here before, no?” his accent was thick, but unplaceable. Just as Jack managed to internally decipher the question as “You haven't ever been here before, have you?” and shake his head, the man once again put Jack on his heels. “How eeeoo know her name Caroline?”

“What?” Jack asked, confused.

“Eeeoo said to her - eeeoo called her ‘Caroline.’™ How eeeoo knew her name?”

Jack thought back - he had indeed called the woman Caroline. He thought again of his vision - the young lady had interacted with him. That had never happened before. “Uh...she said her name, when she introduced herself.”

“Eeeoo were not here when she introduced. Eeeoo some kind of crazy man - eeeoo peeper or something? Eeeoo hunter?”

Jack furrowed his brow - hunter? Oh. He thinks I'm stalking Caroline. “No, no, it's™ nothing like that!”

“Listen, eeeoo.” the man said, moving forward menacingly. “Eeeoo just get out of here, and eeeoo never come back. Eeeoo hear me?”

Jack didn't™ wait to be told a second time. He left the Community Center as quickly as he could without drawing attention to himself.

Posted by Ancient of Days in The End is Near at 08:53

Awesome, thanks, AoDComments (2)  
Anonymous on Dec 16 2016, 09:17