



INSIDE STORIES

Offline Story for Week 4

Truth & Story

(Origin unknown)

Once upon a time there was a well at the centre of the world, and surrounding the well was a circle of houses, and another circle of houses beyond that and beyond that, spreading out across the globe. Into this inner circle of houses strode a dark figure. Dark cape, dark clothes, dark hair, dark, dark eyes, blacker than moonless night. All angular, jutting features, the figure walked squarely to the first door in the circle of houses and knocked.

At the clear, businesslike bang on the door the inhabitants of the house came nervously to the window to check if the visitor was indeed an unwelcome one. A glance between the curtains and the people would hurriedly draw them to and then jump to the door to push extra bolts in place, just in case, then, while someone barred the back door, they would close the hatch to the flat roof and then sit in a huddle waiting until long after the dreaded caller had left the threshold of their property.

The foreboding figure at the door did not knock a second time. Knowing all too certainly that he would not be permitted entrance no matter how many times he hammered the door or wrapped upon the windows. With a judicious grunt he turned precisely on his heel and made straight for the next house, to the same effect. Not a single house in the circle would open its door to him, as it had been with every home around the world.

Finally the severe figure went to sit at the well, pointy chin on hard knuckles, when into the circle glided a carefree character, every bit as colourful as the first figure was not. The bright soul swayed as she approached the well, more dancing than walking, until, with a flourish she did a turn before the dark figure - her flamboyant coat unfurling around her, displaying every colour of creation: the yellows and blues, browns and maroons, greens and reds dazzling with vibrant life! Then, brushing her strawberry blonde curls from her rosy cheeked, softly aged face,

she sat deftly next to the inflexible figure, and looked audaciously, with her golden eyes into his obsidian stare, as he turned to eyeball her with indignant recognition.

“My, why so serious?” sang the charismatic old woman, all grace and sparkle.

“Not a soul will allow me entry into their dwelling,” he said matter-of-factly, “I have come from the farthest corners of the world and here I am now at the centre of it and it is the same in every home I go to: curtains closed, doors locked. This is the way of things.”

He said this last part in a way that was not to be argued with, but the happy woman brushed off the comment with a breezy smile and said, kindly, “It is apparent then that you might have the wrong approach - who are you?”

“It is fitting that you do not know me, for I am Truth,” said the stony figure fixedly, “Nobody knows me yet everybody needs me. I am everything and nothing can exist without me. They all hide their faces from me but in the end they will each know Truth.”

“Ha! *Truth!*,” shouted the glamorous old lady, sunlight burning in her eyes as she went on to say, “Show me *truth* and I will show you *callousness*. Show me *truth* and I will show you someone who says to another that they are fat when they are healthy. Show me *truth* and I will show you someone who says to another that they are stupid when every being is brilliant in their own way. Show me *truth* and I will show you someone who says that there is only one way when there are infinite others. What is definite where there is imagination!?”

“I know who *you* are. You are Story,” said the firm figure and then added with finality, “You fill men’s heads with fanciful fluff and nonsense so that they can hide from me all the more.”

“Oh, *come* now,” eased the sensuous being called Story, “I fill folks with a lot more than that. Let me show you,” she said with a wink as she rose with a resplendent swirl and skipped across to the first house, where she tapped out a friendly knock at the door. One wary peak through a crack in the curtains was all it took for them to be flung open, for the door to be unlocked and thrown wide and for the delightful lady to be all but pulled inside with welcoming cries. No sooner had the door closed than the sound of laughter rang from within the house. There were claps of joy and hushes of happiness, there were songs of memory and satisfied sighs, there were customary calls and responses to much-loved fables and gasps of surprise at inevitable twists in tales, and, yes, there were tears too, before it all began again, over and over the signature sounds of stories being enjoyed and appreciated all the way until the small hours of the morning when, finally, the glorious old lady was let out with pleas for her to return soon.

When Story plopped down contentedly next to Truth he had to defer that there might be more to what she did than even he could comprehend. Story smiled her appreciation for his acknowledgment, then suddenly sat up straight, opening her bright eyes wide at an idea that struck her.

“Come with me,” she said, turning to him with youthful enthusiasm, “Come with me, and see how it feels for yourself.”

Her energy was unbeatable and so Truth agreed to Story’s request.

In one flowing movement the timeless lady rose and spun, opening her dreamcoat as she did so and scooping the dark figure up into it, so that only she seemed to be standing there, by the well. Yet now her coat held dashes of onyx here and there, hints of ebony depths between the myriad shades of earth and sea and sky, echoes of the blackest void behind all the vibrant hues that clad Story’s generous frame.

Now when she knocked gaily on the doors of the houses in the circle, though she was welcomed as warmly as before, her words were met with new curiosity amidst the fun, with thoughtful silences along with the usual utterances of delight, knowing nods as well as the customary laughs and cries, tears and sighs, so that when she eventually came to sit at the well once more, with Truth sitting somewhat enlightened beside her, he could not help but smile - a true and perfect smile - for the very first time, when she said, as he knew she would, for nothing was hidden from him now, “Stay with me.”

With the inexorable tug of truth, he was drawn into story and has remained there ever since, so that every time you hear a tale, as fanciful as it may be, there will also always be, though you may not notice it, at least a little bit of *truth* as well.

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