

The Seat on the Porch

By Ashley Payne, PhD.

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Author's Note:

This story came to me as a whisper, soft but certain, like something my ancestors might've passed down through dreams. I didn't set out to write a metaphor for growth or guidance, but as I reread it, I realized that's exactly what it had become. The porch is comfort. The oak tree is wisdom. The stars, the galaxy, the centaur, they're the parts of me reaching beyond what I know, even while honoring where I come from. I've always loved fantasy because it lets us touch the divine and the dangerous all at once. Writing this gave me peace. I hope reading it gives you something to hold on to, too.

Setting:

The Seat on the Porch is a lyrical, fantasy-rooted short story that explores ancestral wisdom, astral travel, and the courage to leave comfort in search of transformation. Told through the lens of a young girl guided by her grandmother's stories, the piece journeys through luminous worlds and spiritual tests, culminating in a revelation that home is never lost, only carried forward. This concept is ideal for adaptation into a visual narrative, a voiceover short, or an animated anthology focused on healing, identity, and the mystical bond between generations.

Let's go to the porch.....

In a large-grassed field nestled in a far countryside, was a small farmhouse with an oak tree in the front yard. It was an empty land of acres but filled with so much richness, peace, magic, and imagination. Every Wednesday night, the young girl and her grandmother would sit on the porch with a cold drink; they'd sit in silence for hours in their rocking chairs. In their comfort place, Wednesday story nights meant something special, it was a tradition to amplify the powers of storytelling because it brought on astral communication and mind travel. A space was created to explore another place, freely and safely. From time to time, her grandmother would share mystical stories of journeys in a different world with creatures, fairy queens, monsters, and guardians. As her grandmother told tall tales, the young girl would listen and then fall asleep in her chair, having dreams about the story. Nothing ever came from her dreams but the anticipation of what comes next. She wondered if there was more to happen or if her grandmother would just share a completely new story.

On a Wednesday night, grandmother told a new story about a young girl hearing a voice in the wind away from her comfort place. This was the soft voice of a woman; her tone was sweet and subtle. "My dear, you are so far from me. Come here, I have something to show you". The young girl heard the voice and jumped up; she left the porch. She looked around,

panicked because she did not see a physical person. The voice repeated itself, and the girl began to walk towards it. She found herself in the middle of nothing but a beautiful, dark sky filled with shooting stars. The girl looked around for the woman but saw nothing. She gazed up at the sky and suddenly saw a star falling above her head, but she did not move; the girl became star-gazed. The silhouette of a woman surrounded by stars appeared and stood before her. "I am here, I am what you seek". "What is it that I seek? What would you know?" said the young girl. The woman-star figure did not reply, turned her back to the girl, and walked away. The young girl repeated her questions because she knew that if the woman departed from her, she would not find what she sought, to get away and see a new world.

Far Away

The stories her grandmother shared talked about lands of gold, rivers filled with glitter, and large but gentle creatures who were protectors from the darkness. Despite any possible danger, the good outweighed the bad. She knew there was lighter than shadows, a beautiful sighting of the moon than a bloody sun. As the woman figure continued to walk away, the girl asked her to stop. She knew the stories of fantasy land and wanted to explore but was afraid to move further away from her chair on the porch. What if her grandmother came outside and saw that she was gone? What if she left and never came back? The woman-star figure faced the young girl and said, "As long as you are in fear, you will always wonder". Those words alone moved the young girls' feet to walk with the woman and they began to ascend to the sky side by side as fast as a rocket going into Earth's orbit. All of a sudden, on this intergalactic travel they entered a new galaxy of flashing lights, they briefly froze and slowly dropped into a field of glittered oak trees. You see, in ancient times, the oak tree symbolized wisdom and divine communication. The girl immediately remembered the porch and in the short distance the Oaktree at her grandmother's house but could not connect the two. She didn't understand why she saw a piece of home in another place.

The woman said to the girl, "You recognize this place because you were here before, in your mind". In a look of confusion across the girls' face the woman continued to say "The porch that you see represents serenity, balance, and nurture. The oak tree that you see depicts a stable life, one of longevity and growth". Appearing uncertain, the young girl asked about the land and all that was there such as animals and the rivers. What else would this part of the galaxy entail? What else would come before her? The woman explained to the girl how she would walk through a magical forest of light and ride on centaurs, galloping across clear rivers shining with large crystals on its floors. They'd ride for miles through the sweet scents of jasmine and rose in the air under a sky as bright with large specs of sparkling gems. However, her protective male centaur knew that when the sky became dark not to trail further because it led to another end of the land where the roads were dense, the trees were bare, and the skies were dark and smoky.

Recollection

With a curious mind, the girl told the woman that while this part of the land was safe, she wanted to explore further. After all, the aura was pure and fascinating. If there was a darkness, she felt no harm would come to her. However, the woman warned the young girl that if she went into the dark lands, she would be fooled, tricked, and cursed. Later in the evening, the girl roamed through the magical forest alone admiring the beautiful flowers, small fairies, and creatures that helped to preserve the forest. As she stood looking up at the sky, a milky white centaur with gray hair approached her. Slowly walking towards her, the young girl became stunned at the majestic look of this beautiful being. Feeling soothing and comforting energy, as the centaur kneeled before her, she jumped on its back and they began to ride swiftly through the beautiful land. The girl was filled with excitement and captivated by all that she saw. The centaur slowed its pace and the girl became confused.

He spoke and said, "We mustn't go any further, those parts are forbidden." She began to ask questions wondering how a land so alluring has darkness. She immediately felt sad. You see, when a living being enters the dark lands or gets too close, they become weakened, melancholy, and easily experience illusions that can be tricky. They turned around and went back to the forest of light and the girl asked the centaur if he ever walked through the dark lands. "Like you, at a young age, I had the eagerness to see what was beyond. One sleepless night, I wandered and entered the dark lands. It felt cold and gloomy. Until I saw another centaur. She had a beautiful brown-shiny coat. She graciously sipped water from a flowing stream as her silky hair blew through the calm wind. I was stunned at her beauty and walked closer to her. She quickly looked at me! The king tides swallowed the rocks and her eyes became raged and bright as wildfire. I ran away from the dark lands through the hard-blowing winds under falling trees and large branches trying to capture me. By a small gap, I leaped through the closings of the branches back into the bright lands." The illusion from the centaur was that he was seeking a mate and the brown centaur was his ideal, and he never went back.

Although dim and somber, the dark lands can seep into your mind grabbing the most precious thoughts and using it against you. The girl understood as she did not want to be in danger, however, she had a peculiar mind. Falling into a deep sleep, late in the night she tossed and turned until she heard the voice of her grandmother calling her name. She immediately jumped up and followed the voice walking under the stars. Feeling the cool breeze against her face, going through a field of hollyhock flowers. She ran her hands across, still following her grandmother's voice, and found herself at the entry of the dark lands. With a quick recollection of the forewarning of her centaur, her feet did not move but her grandmother's voice instructed her to continue walking, with little hesitation. As she walked, there appeared a small house, with an oak tree and two seats on the porch. Stunned with excitement, her grandmother's voice became louder and the girl ran faster and came upon the porch, but grandmother was nowhere in sight.

She sat down in her seat and on the table next to it was a glass of water with a fresh lemon. Rocking in the chair, her eyes closed and she felt her peaceful home. A figure of her

grandmother appeared at the lower steps calling her name. She slowly opened her eyes and said "Grandmother, why are you there and not in your chair? I heard your voice and did not see you. Can you come closer?" "No, why don't you come down here to me?" said Grandmother. The girl became a bit confused as they both shared sacred moments on the porch in their chairs. Her grandmother barely walked off of the porch, let alone asked her to come down. The girl stood up and walked to the steps and saw the figure did not look quite right. Her eyes were all black and soulless. The figure repeated itself for the girl to come down but she refused. This did not make the figure happy and she began to scream loud scaring the young girl. The girl ran around the porch asking for help from the star-figured woman to come to her.

The Lesson

Thankfully, a star fell from the sky onto the porch in front of the girl. The dark figure at the bottom of the porch screamed louder, wolves began to howl and the trees became unsettled. The star figure and girl scaled across the sky as the thunder rolled and lightning sparked uncontrollably but made it safely into the forest of light. The girl was startled and afraid because she knew she was forbidden to enter the dark lands. The star figure spoke and said "I knew you would go there. You are inquisitive; but do you see?" "See what?" the girl replied. The star figure said, "Do you see how the glow of home will always be with you but you must not let in the darkness, you should not give into it? Do not lose your teachings away from home." The girl had been sheltered by her grandmother, and she did not experience much outside of the porch and their acres of land. She recognized the seat was only a placeholder until she was ready to get up and leave. You can rock back and forth and daydream but the willingness to be guided because there is much in store throughout the universe. You will never lose your home, as long as you do not lose yourself.