

# BOYSENVILLE

## *BEYOND THE BERRY FARM*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Knott's Berry Farm, America's First Theme Park

It all started in the year 1921.

There once was a farmer named Walter Knott, he had little luck on his small farm as he cared for his crops. One day he came upon a strange vine, left behind by a mysterious creator. Though the vine had begun to wither, upon it grew a purple berry. A berry the world had never seen before. The farmer cared for the vine and after much trial and error the vine began to prosper and more berries began to sprout. Many people flocked from all over to see the new wonderful berries he had found.

The farmer wanted to pay tribute to the man whom originally invented them, but had no idea who exactly put them there. After much research the farmer finally found the name of one man. A man by the name of Rudolf Boysen. He talked with Mr. Boysen one time.

Mr. Boysen told the farmer that he had crossbred the berry from the blackberry, loganberry and raspberry, and that they were truly a wonder of their own.

The farmer wanted to know more, but for some reason Mr. Boysen wanted nothing to do with the berry, saying that he didn't want to be part of that world anymore.

He did, However, allow the farmer to take the berry as his own. So he did, but still the farmer wasn't the type of person to take something for nothing. Instead he paid tribute to Mr. Boysen naming them after him. From that moment on the purple berries were known as Boysenberries.

With these Boysenberries came good fortune. The farmers' prosperity and farm grew, starting from nothing more than a small berry stand alongside the road. Over time his wife began to sell pies made from the berry. Many people flocked and soon enough the farmer's wife decided to serve tea and delicious chicken dinners, the first guests being served on the only dishes they had... their wedding china. Even more people flocked so they created the "Chicken Dinner Restaurant". People would wait in line for a meal by the thousands for many hours.

The farmer felt bad that his customers had to wait for such a long time, so he decided to entertain the guests while they waited. He created many ways to do this, the most elaborate was a replica ghost town of the old west, people loved it. He hired people to play cowboys and Indians. There were wagons and horses, and all the people were now entertained. This went on for a very long time.

Over the years and as more people flocked to Mr. Knott's farm; He added to his land, creating other themed areas and rides for his customers to enjoy. Themed lands like Fiesta village, the boardwalk, and wild water wilderness. Each alongside the Ghost town and each of them with wonderful rides and attractions of their own... And so came the beginning of Americas first theme park, Knott's berry farm.

Many, many years later something strange began to happen... the Boysenberries began to wither away. The farmer assembled a team to find a solution, but all their efforts were in vain and no matter what they tried all the Boysenberries would wither and die. Since then no boysenberry had grown upon that land which was once a farm and now turned theme park...

“Those who were cowards never started, and those who were weak were lost along the way, but the brave find a home in every land.” -Walter Knott.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Lost and found

My story begins on the same day the Boysenberries began to wither away. I'm not sure how old I was exactly but I'm quite certain I was around the age of five. My story also begins in America's first theme park, "Knott's Berry Farm".

Now that I think back I must have looked so odd. I was a dark little boy dressed in nothing more than sandals, a loin cloth and an odd leather glove on my right hand. These were the oddest of clothes to be worn in the 1990's, I must have looked like I was from a totally different era.

The memory of this day is vague and I don't remember much about it, but what I do know is that I was heartbroken and I didn't know why.

Scared and alone I cried out for someone, anyone at all really. I remember seeing other children with their families having a wonderful time in this theme park, but not me... I didn't even know what a theme park was at the time.

I remember wandering around trying to figure out where I was, this couldn't have been very long but it felt like an eternity to me at the time... Suddenly someone noticed me. A young girl. She found me, pan and broom in hand and knelt down on one knee talking to me at my height.

"It's okay sweetie." She said. "You don't need to cry."

Back then she looked so much older but she couldn't have been more than eighteen or nineteen years old.

"What's your name sweetie?" She asked.

"Miko." I answered

"Michael?" She replied, she pronounced my name wrong, but she was so sweet that I didn't mind, instead I nodded.

"Well my name is Clara." She replied. "It's nice to meet you!"

"It's nice to meet you too." I replied.

Clara asked me what my parents looked like, but I couldn't remember. She asked me if I had brothers or sisters and if I could remember what they were wearing, but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't remember anything, I knew there was something there, but it was like whatever memories I used to have were wiped away or suppressed somehow.

She held my hand as we walked through the theme park looking for my group, her pointing at different families asking if I recognized any of them, but I didn't. Occasionally she would let go of my hand so that she could sweep for a moment, but before I got anxious she'd be holding my hand again. She was extremely kind and tried to cheer me up as much as she could, I guess

she didn't want me to cry anymore so she started to compliment me on what a great costume I was wearing. She said it looked so real.

Eventually Clara led me to lost and found at the entrance of the park, she gave me a hug and a sticker assuring me that soon my family would come to find me there. I watched her through a window as she left, her sweeping and greeting guests along the way until I could no longer see her as she disappeared into the crowded park.

Hours went by at lost and found while I waited. The workers there kept me occupied. They even let me ride a few of the rides, but soon the day had passed, and still no-one had come to find me. It was like I didn't even exist.

Eventually city authorities came and I was taken to an orphanage and became the "states problem", well that's what the people at the orphanage used to say.

I hated it there, it was by far the worst years of my life. The other kids liked to pick on me. They'd steal my things and make fun of me. So I learned to make fun of myself before they got the chance, eventually I learned to be sarcastic enough to fight back, even grew a sense of humor which made them leave me alone most of the time.

I didn't like it there, most of the adults had cold demeanors and most of the other children wanted nothing to do with me.... Except for her.

Her name was Michelle and she was the most beautiful thing I had ever laid eyes on. She was kind to me. She taught me that my life had meaning. That I was a good person, and she believed in me. She would always tell me that someday I'd be something amazing. I don't know my actual age but I believe she was around the same age as I, Thirteen. I fell in love with Michelle Immediately.

Not ever had I met anyone as kind as her. For her I would do anything. I'd even re-live all those lonely years in that orphanage again just to meet her once more.

Once Michelle and I were old enough we left that Orphanage and I married her, vowing to take care of her the rest of our days. I wanted to be as sweet and kind to her as she had been to me, she had saved me and given me a reason to live. I knew that no matter what, I would never let anything happen to her.

Together life became wonderful. Every day was a fresh new adventure and we would do our best to enjoy every part of it....

Yet ...still, in the depths of my mind, I wanted to know what happened that day at "Knott's Berry Farm". Who were my parents? Where were they? Did I even have parents? Or did I just appear out of nowhere? I had to find out, I needed to remember.

My wife and I decided that the best way to remember would be at that theme park. We applied for jobs at Knott's berry farm and were hired that same day!

Michelle got a job in the western museum, and I a job as a ride operator.

I excelled at the job. For some reason me and rides just clicked. I knew how they worked and all their different functions almost immediately. I practically learned every ride there was to know. Almost as if it were meant to be.

Michelle loved working in the Western museum because there were so many pieces of history there. Walter Knott found and preserved each and every one of them, he had created the museum himself. She liked the fact that she would be the one to teach people the stories of each and every western treasure. Truly this was what she always wanted to do. It also reminded her of her favorite moment from when were orphans... At one time the orphanage had funded a field trip to a museum. I remember that day vividly, Michelle loved everything about that day. We

saw animals from around the world and dinosaur bones, ancient relics and other various historical treasures. We listened as one of the workers gave us a tour. I remember Michelle pointing at our tour guide and whispering to me saying.

“That’s what I want to do someday Michael, I want to tell people about the past.”

I knew that someday she would, and as fate would have it, she ended up working in a museum... on a smaller scale of course, but still she was working in a museum in this theme park, and giving tours to any guest that would ask.

Together we both enjoyed our jobs at Knott’s Berry Farm and day after day I tried to remember what happened years ago, back when I was that lost little boy in the park. I like to write so I would keep a note pad and write down anything that felt familiar, but there was n’t much to write about, nothing seemed familiar. Even after a year of trying no memory came to me. It was like I didn’t exist before that day.

I had almost given up until one day I saw the big locomotive resting in its station in ghost town. It was the one ride in the park that I had yet to operate and something inside told me that I needed to operate that too. So I transferred to the railroad, and became a locomotive engineer, operating the train through the theme park. I loved working on the train. I even made a few friends out of my coworkers along the way and every day since I knew something was coming... Something big. A memory maybe. Eventually I fell in love with the job so much that I gave up trying. It would take another ten years before it began to happen. One night I began to dream ...

## CHAPTER TWO

### Only a Nightmare

“*Where am I?*” I remember thinking as the world slowly began to appear out of the dark. Bashfully and not completely my surroundings began to show. Light fixtures coming into view first. Then lamp posts and walkways. Railing began to swerve around what seemed to be a queue line. It was still very dark but I could hear the sound of a roller coaster moving on its track, the harder I looked the more I could see. There was nobody riding it though, nobody operating it either. It felt eerie being there alone, it was as if everyone had disappeared and the rides were now operating themselves. I began to search for someone.

I felt like I had been wandering around in the dark for ages, as if I had been in this semi dark world my whole existence.

Suddenly a large beam of light flashed up into the sky and I could see the light shine upon a large disk like ride moving up a large pole shaped tower.

“I’m at work!” I shouted out, beginning to recognize myself and my existence. “I’m at Knott’s!” I knew that ride for sure, it was called the Sky Cabin and it was the first ride I had learned to operate in the park. I used to load people in that cabin so they could get a good view of the park from above. You could see the entire city from that high, and on a clear day you could see all the way to the ocean.

I remembered most everything now, thinking it must be really late at night. Plus, there was nobody around, so the park must be closed by now. Then I remembered my wife Michelle.

“*She must be waiting for me so we could drive home together!*” I thought.

I didn’t want her to get worried so I decided to leave.

Suddenly something sprinted past me... a young boy headed towards the sky cabin. The boy stopped just for a moment to look back at me and smile. He was wearing no more than sandals and a loin cloth. He waved his hand and motioned to me to come with him before continuing to run towards the sky cabin.

I ran after the boy trying my best to keep up, eventually he stopped in front of the sky cabins queue line entrance, his head looking up as he watched the sky cabin rotate at the top of its tower.

Once I caught up with him he paid no attention to my arrival, instead he just stood there, staring at the ride.

"Hey buddy." I greeted him, but he didn't reply. He continued to stare, his eyes fixated on the sky cabin as it slowly rotated back down to its loading dock.

"Where are your parents?" I asked.

Still no reply. It was like he couldn't hear me.

"Come on..." I said. "It's time to go home."

"Time to go home?" The boy finally replied. Looking at me with wide eyes.

"Yes" I answered. "Time to go home."

And with that the boy took off heading into the sky cabins queue line and up its spiral stair case, I followed him up the stair case which was a long way up in my dream.

After climbing what seemed to be thousands of spiral stairs I finally arrived at the rides loading dock.

When I got there I couldn't see the boy but I noticed the rides entrance doors were wide open, and the lights were on.

I called out to the boy but he didn't answer back.

...Suddenly a gut feeling... Something was telling me not to go inside the sky cabins entrance.

Slowly a darkness began to grow inside the cabin. The lights began to flicker and go out. A darkness had overtaken the ride. I knew that whatever was inside this cabin was bad, something evil, something sinister.

Suddenly a voice whispered from the void.

"Come back to me Miko." It said.

I took a step back from the entrance. The voice made me uneasy. I had heard it somewhere before and knew that it was foul.

I called out for the boy once more. I felt bad for him and feared this dark void would get him, but then the darkness shot out of the cabin attaching itself to me, binding me.

It began to drag me into the cabin with it. This thing, whatever it was, was much more powerful than I and I could do nothing to stop it, only squirm and scream as my helpless body was dragged into the darkness.

"*This is it.*" I thought to myself. This was the end of me as I began to fade into the void.

"Come back to me Miko." The voice whispered again as my existence faded away.

"Come back, so that I may consume you..."

After having that dream, or should I say nightmare, I would wake up in a sweat, and the dream would fade away from my memory almost as fast as it came. I would try my best to remember as much as I could, I would even try to write it down in a note pad beside my bed, but little of it would remain with me. All I knew was that it was a dream about the theme park and that it had something to do with my past.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A day in the life...

I was awake early one morning and if I hurried I could make breakfast before Michelle and I left for work. Quickly but quietly I hopped into the shower. I didn't want to wake her, she needed her rest, she was four months pregnant and she wouldn't be able to go back to sleep if I woke her.

"Hot, hot, hot." I whispered, cringing as I adjusted the water Temperature. I scrubbed, I washed and I rinsed before stumbling out of the shower and blindly snagging a towel.

While brushing my teeth I noticed that Michelle was no longer in bed.

*"I must have woken her."* I thought.

I decided to continue getting ready putting my work costume on; which consisted of Denim Overalls, a red flannel long sleeved shirt and a train engineers hat. I'd also grab my leather glove that I've had since the day I was found in the park as a boy all those years ago, it would be silly to wear it so I would keep it in my back pocket.

It was a weird glove, it even had a weird symbol on it. The symbol kind of looked like a boomerang. I remember it fitting me all those years ago when I was a child, but for some reason it still fit all these years later. I've always found it extremely odd that it still fit especially because now I'm much bigger... six foot two to be exact. I remember thinking to myself *"Maybe I stretched it out."* But it still looked as it did twenty-four years ago, only larger. I always kept that glove with me, it was the only thing I had left from my past, and I had a deep inner hunch that it would be the key to unlocking memories from all those years ago.

I didn't want to lose that glove and it would probably be more fitting to keep it locked away, but I figured it might help trigger a memory from my past, so I took wherever I went anyway.

It was now the end of September, supposedly a storm today, so I grabbed my jacket out of the closet. It had been awhile since I had worn it. I had gained a few pounds but it still fit nice. Like every other morning I took a step back from the mirror to critique my costume. Decent enough I thought, my dark brown reflection peering back at me. The only thing that bothered me as of late was all the grey hair I was beginning to acquire.

*"thirty"* I thought to myself. "I'm getting old."

Suddenly a kiss on my cheek. "We're getting old." Michelle Playfully replied.

"Yup." I laughed.

"Don't take too long." Said Michelle. "Breakfast is almost ready."

*"That's my wife."* I thought.

I wanted to make her breakfast this morning, but no matter what, she would always find a way to be one step ahead of me. Always taking care of me.

Once breakfast was made we sat together. She made me eggs over easy and scrambled for herself, both with bacon and a large glass of orange juice. I drank mine immediately and before long my glass was empty. Michelle offered me another glass. I insisted on getting it myself, but sweetly she grabbed my glass making her way to the fridge. She always wanted to do things herself, quite stubborn at times, but I understood this because I was just as stubborn and then

some, so I would let her try to do most things while she was pregnant at least once and wait until she got frustrated enough to ask me for help, but most of the time she'd try two or three times before sweetly handing over any task.

We talked for a while that morning before she got ready for work. We always did. We enjoyed each other's company and conversations. Soon it was time for us to head to work. We grabbed our things and headed for the door. Before we left she straightened the Engineers hat on my head. She gave me a kiss telling me she loved me, and I her.

We made it to work with time to spare. Through the employee entrance we parted and went to our separate jobs in different parts of the theme park.

I was about to hop aboard the Locomotive when Dave, one of the mechanics, stopped me.

"Here you go Michael." Said Dave putting his hand out. Behold in the center of his palm rested a fresh Boysenberry.

"Where did you get this?" I asked in amazed.

"I found it." He said as he handed it over.

"But where? I thought all the Boysenberry were long gone?"

"They were; I haven't seen one in the twenty years I've been here!"

"Then where did you get it???"

"Come with me." He said as we walked around the side of the locomotive shop.

There in the most hidden of places grew a tiny vine, creeping its way up the outer side of the shop wall. It was in bloom and had a few small berries growing from it.

"These must be the only Boysenberries left in the park." Said Dave. "The rest are long gone... Do you know what happened to all the Boysenberries?"

"I've heard stories." I replied. "But they're all different."

"Well, a long time ago Mr. Knott had whole vines of boysenberries growing all over the park. But one day they all began die. He had a whole team of landscapers try to save them, but no matter what they did, the berries would wither away. For the longest time, no boysenberry has grown on this property... until now."

"Why do you think they've come back?" I asked.

"I don't know." Replied Dave. "But I've heard stories that they are very special. That this entire theme park never would have existed without them in the first place."

"Really?" I replied.

"Yes, and there are other rumors too!"

"What kind of rumors?" I asked now intrigued. I loved hearing about Knott's Berry Farm. Some of the stories go back over ninety years!

"I've heard that these berries are some kind of magic." Dave continued. "A very strange and powerful magic."

"Magic?" I asked.

"Yes, I remember hearing something about them being linked to another world."

"Well that's kind of farfetched." I replied. "Are you sure you're not just remembering the story of Jack and the Bean stalk?"

"I'm sure!" Dave snapped. "I'm just telling you what I've heard."

"...I believe you."

"You do?"

"Yes..." I laughed. "I believe you heard a story and were gullible enough to buy into it."

"Okay, okay. Maybe I am gullible, but can you explain why the boysenberry vine grows



here all these years later after they had completely vanished from the park?”

“No sir, I can’t, maybe it ‘is’ more magical than we two could imagine?”

“Maybe.” Dave agreed. “And maybe this is just the beginning, maybe the boysenberry will make their way to the rest of the park, just like years ago.”

Dave was a little odd, but he was one of the best Mechanics I knew. He had been working at Knott’s Berry Farm for over twenty years! He had even met the creator of Knott’s Berry Farm, Mr. Walter Knott himself!

I tried to hand the berry back to Dave but he wouldn’t take it saying. “I’m more of a strawberry kind of guy... you keep it.”

I didn’t want to be rude so I kept the berry. I figured I’d save it for later. I wrapped it in a handkerchief that was part of my costume and placed it in my pocket.

The day went by like normal. An announcement went off signaling the opening of the park. Thousands of people rushed in headed towards their favorite rides.

Me and my fireman Aaron worked the locomotive around the park, the fireman is the other Engineer who keeps the steam boiler on the locomotive hot, so the locomotive has lots of steam pressure to make it move.

Guests loved riding the train, it was western themed and very scenic. Sometimes the guests were lucky enough to get robbed by train bandits. On rare occasions there was even a shootout in Ghost town as the train would arrive back to the Depot, the bandits always put on a good show as they were confronted by the town Marshal after “robbing” the train.

Many people would come asking questions about the train, how old it was and how fast it could go. Young children would come up to the train dressed like train Engineers, telling us they wanted to drive trains someday too. We would always encourage them, trying to make their day, handing out railroad stickers. The job wasn’t easy but it was well worth it when you were able to make some-one’s day.

Soon enough after many trips around the park, the sun began to set. The day had ended and an announcement signaled the end of another fun filled day.

Aaron and I parked the locomotive shutting it down for the night. We began to check the coaches and as we did Aaron found a child’s doll left behind on one of the seats. He had started earlier than I did today, so I volunteered to take it to lost and found at the entrance of the park.

I had to pass through ghost town, one of the parks oldest themed areas to get there. There were a few different themed areas other than Ghost Town. There was the boardwalk, wild wilderness, Indian Trails, and fiesta village, but Ghost Town one was by far my favorite because it was “The old west.” I loved the various shops along the way, the calico saloon, a leather shop, the blacksmith. It felt very authentic because most of the buildings in the park were in fact real buildings taken from actual ghost towns.

Once I arrived at lost and found there was a little girl waiting with her dad on a bench. Once she saw me she jumped up.

“There it is!” She said grabbing the doll right out of my hands and hugging it as tight as she could.

It kind of reminded me of myself waiting there for my family all those years ago, but what she was waiting for came back to her.

“*Lucky her*” I thought to myself shrugging and putting my hands in my pockets as I headed back through ghost town.

As my hands shuffled around in my pockets I noticed the handkerchief that I had placed in there earlier that morning. I figured the Boysenberry inside must be destroyed by now, but once revealed it was in perfect condition. I decided to eat it there and then. It was delicious, couldn't wait until the vine grew more, Maybe I'd take some for Michelle.

## Chapter Four

### Whisked away...

I headed back through ghost town, it was getting colder now. In the distance I could see thunder clouds heading towards the park. Flashes of light followed by crackles from afar. I quickened my pace wanting to get my wife and I home before the rain began.

I stopped for a moment, noticing a few rain drops falling from the sky and leaving small water marks on concrete...

...Suddenly something ran past me. As my eyes began to focus on it I noticed it was a young boy. The boy was headed toward the sky cabin in the Boardwalk themed area of the park. He was dressed in some kind of weird tribal gear, loin cloth and sandals. For some reason this felt familiar but I couldn't put two and two together at the time.

I followed the boy up into the sky cabin, but once inside he was no longer there. I have to admit I found this very eerie and thought the boy may have been a ghost!

On account of all the creepiness I decided to head back out of the cabin, but before I could all the lights on board began to flicker. Then the control panel lit up and the doors closed locking me inside. A shrill of terror engulfed me to my core as I began to pry on the doors with my fingers but it was no use. I even pounded on the doors thinking, "*Maybe someone will hear me.*" But no one did.

Rain began to pour outside, the wind picking up now. The ride was on. The fear that festered inside of me finally began to subside and was soon replaced with anger and frustration.

"It's starting to rain!" I shouted at the cabin. "I've got to go home!"

Without warning the Cabin began to move! It slowly began to lift up to the top of the tower, and as it reached the top there was a large blinding flash that I could only assume was lightning hitting the cabin.

The sky cabin had now reached the top of the tower, and since I had operated the ride many times before I assumed that it would be heading back down the tower shortly to finish its ride cycle and let me out, but that didn't happen. Instead the strangest of things happened... the cabin somehow continued to rise further into the air! It had somehow passed the top of the tower! It was flying! Three hundred feet, six hundred feet, one thousand feet!

Soon enough the cabin was well above the thunder clouds and I could see the lightning in the storm now flashing in a dark sea of cloud below as the cabin and I floated high above the unseen earth.

It had been awhile since I had worked this ride, and even back then I had never seen it do anything as strange as this, but I needed to at least try to reverse it somehow. Or at least keep it from rising any further.

In a panic I used the control panel to emergency stop, and amazingly it did! Floating completely still high above the earth in the sky. The ride was simple enough. Maybe if I restarted the ride it would go back to the loading dock. But as soon as I tried the cabin began to free fall

back through the clouds, and I free falling inside of it! For a moment I remember thinking to myself. *"I wish I was anywhere but here!"*

Though I was shaken up. I knew I had to be brave, so I tried with all of my might to make it back to the panel as I jumbled inside the cabin, it rotating in a downward spiral plummeting back towards the earth. Through the windows I could see the earth getting closer... I had to do something fast or this cabin was going to crash land with me in it! I grabbed ahold of the railing pulling myself as close as I could to the control panel and pushed the emergency stop button once more. Once pushed the cabin came to a halt miraculously hovering about ten feet above the ground.

*"I must be dead!"* I thought trying to understand what had just happened. But then I realized my heart was pounding as much as a humming bird flaps its tiny little wings.

*"Surely I'm still alive."* I thought as I laid on the sky cabins floor. I started to breathe slowly trying my best to calm all the anxiety. Once I had finally calmed myself enough I began to try and stand. Thankfully, other than a few bumps and bruises, I was still intact. The only harm that had come to me was mostly psychological. I took another look outside the sky cabins windows...It was dark outside now but I could tell I was now above what seemed to be a sandy beach.

I remember thinking how Impossible the situation was as I once again used my fingers to pry at the cabins doors.

*"This is not happening... This has to be a dream. There is no way that the sky cabin could go anywhere without being attached to its tower!"*

...Yet here the sky cabin was levitating ten feet above the ground of some beach that I couldn't recognize.

My attempts to pry open the sky cabins doors were unsuccessful... until I finally became frustrated enough to shout.

"Open!" I demanded while using my fingers to pry at the doors. Shockingly the doors abruptly opened on their own. My heart sank into my stomach as I took a step back wondering what was going on?

*"At least the doors are open again."* I thought.

I decided to leave that terrifying ride before it had the idea of taking me back up into the sky once more. It was a pretty good jump from the cabin to the beach below, so I hung from the cabin to lessen the fall. As soon as I landed on the beach the cabin came crashing down slamming in front of me, the sound of it all echoed through my body.

*"I'm glad I wasn't inside when that happened."* I thought.

The beach was dark, no light anywhere. I remember telling myself that I had to get back home, but something was happening to my mind. I began to find myself wondering where I had to get back to, I couldn't remember. I didn't know where I was or how I got there.

I stared at the sky cabin thinking to myself *"What's that thing?"* and *"How did I get here?"* I had lost all memory of everything, even things that had just happened slowly faded from my mind. But I knew that someone was waiting for me. A woman, that loved me very much. How I was going to get to her I didn't know.

I was utterly lost, but I knew that I had to find a way.

I lay there on that cold beach for the night staring into the ocean, it was vast and I didn't know I had seen an ocean before, so it was like seeing it for the first time all over again. It was beautiful and disturbing at the same time.

*“How could it be so big?”* I thought to myself.

I stayed there on that beach, waiting, trying to remember, then finally sleeping as the waves crashed in the distance.

I dreamt that night. It was about a Woman. She was beautiful and when I came to her she asked me where I had gone. “I don’t know.” I told her. “I don’t even know who I am.”

“You are Michael.” She replied. “How do you not remember who you are?”

“I can’t I’m sorry.”

The Woman held my face in her hands looking directly into my eyes. “Don’t forget me.” She pleaded. “I’m your wife.”

## The boardwalk

The sun had come up as I slept on that beach. Something poked me in my side.

“Don’t poke at him.” Said a young feminine voice. “He’ll wake up.”

“Nope, I think he’s dead.” replied a young masculine voice.

“Really?... because dead things don’t breathe.”

“Well good, he can get off our beach. Wake up you!” He demanded smacking me in the head with a stick.

I turned my body over yelling from all the pain, then grabbed the stick out of his hand and tossed it as far as I could.

As my eyes began to focus, I began to see the two figures, one of which was standing over me, an angry young man dressed in cuffed blue jeans, a white t-shirt, and a leather jacket. He was sporting a pompadour hair style... your typical greaser style hooligan.

The other was much calmer and collected. A young woman. She kept her distance. She wore a white dress with red polka dots. Red lipstick and she had jet black hair pinned up in a red bandana.

“Hey??? Who do you think you are?!” Said the young man. “You can’t just steal someone’s hitting stick!”

“Who do you think YOU are???” I replied. “Hitting people WITH sticks???”

“We are operators, protectors of the Boardwalk.” Replied the young lady. “I am Coast Ryder, and the guy annoying you is Surfside.”

“That’s right!” Surfside added. “This is our beach! Now scram!”

“This is your beach?”

“Yeah, and your trespassing on it!”

“Tress-pass-ing?... What does that mean?” I asked.

“It means you’re not supposed to be here! That bad things will happen to you if you stay here, you may even die... Now leave!”

I didn’t want to argue with this Surfside guy, it seemed he already made up his mind about me and I was much too depressed to fight with him.

“Okay.” I answered. “...I’ll leave.”

I stood up and dusted the sand from my clothes then walked away... But I didn’t know where to go. I was so confused that I accidentally left my hat behind.

The two watched me as I wandered down the beach.

“Hmmm. Thought he’d put up a bigger fight than that?” Said Surfside.

“Why do you have to be so mean Surf?” Asked Coast.

“I’m not mean!” Demanded Surfside. “He’s trespassing on our beach!” We’re supposed to protect the beach and boardwalk from anything and anyone... remember?”

“I know.” Replied Coast. “But he looks harmless. I think he might be lost, maybe we should help him?”

“Things aren’t always what they seem.” Surfside remarked. “He could be very dangerous.”

“I don’t think so.” She declared. “If he was bad, he would have tried something by now, he probably just needed a place to rest.”

“Maybe, but can we take those kind of chances? What if he came out of the water?”

“Look at the way he’s dressed!” She countered as she picked up the Engineer’s hat that I had forgotten. “I don’t think anything in that water dresses like that, and you weren’t very nice to him. what if you were lost and didn’t know where to go? Then at the first sight of people you get smacked in the head with a stick and are told to scam? How would that make you feel?”

“Why?” Surfside frustratingly asked. “Why do you always have to make me feel guilty about every, little, thing I do?”

“Because you are guilty.” Coast answered. “We are Operators, right? We should at least have some decency and show some kind of hospitality. We should see what’s wrong with him.”

“But I don’t wanna!” Surfside Demanded...

Meanwhile I began to take a long look at my surroundings as I stood there on that beach. There was a pier nearby, a boardwalk and some nearby shops but everything looked abandoned.

One thing I saw and found most interesting was a strange green fountain off in the distance. It was oddly placed in the sand. This fountain was very large and had different animal heads made of stone. There were lions heads, fish heads, crabs, and ram’s heads all leading up to a statue of a woman. The woman was dressed in a gown at the top whom held her arm out reaching into the sky, I think she may have been carrying a light of some sort. It also seemed as though she may have been looking at me, but that could’ve just been my imagination.

The fountain was beautiful as it continually gushed a stream of water from the top where the woman stood, the water flowed downward over the different animal statues cascading along the way then finally ending in a large circular pool at the bottom. It was so beautiful that I thought whomever had made it had put much effort into their work. I felt lucky to have seen it, but felt bad that there was nobody else around to enjoy it.

It was just me here, those other two, but they didn’t even want me around, and a large beach. I had no clue where I was, didn’t even know where I came from. I decided to go back to the sky cabin only because it looked somewhat familiar. I knew something had happened with it but I couldn’t remember what.

When I got to the Sky cabin I could hear Surfside and Coast arguing, their voices echoing in the distance. They eventually stopped and found me there.

“Hello.” Greeted Coast, with a smile on her face. She returned my hat back to me.

“Thanks.” I replied.

“We’re sorry for all the confusion earlier, the two of us are actually pretty nice once you get to know us... Isn’t that right Surf?”

For a moment Surfside wouldn’t answer, but then Coast looked at him with the most hazardous of glares.

“Isn’t... THAT RIGHT SURF???” She said again, but this time in a more ferocious of tones.

“Fine!... Yes, we’re so sorry.” Surf finally answered, his voice reluctant and monotone.

I shrugged. I didn’t really care if they were sorry or not.

Coast asked me if I was lost. I told her I didn't know and I couldn't remember anything. "Sure sounds like your lost to me." She replied with a light grin. "Do you know your name?"

I thought very hard for a moment and then it came to me.

"Michael." I told her, I could at least remember that.

"Where did you come from?" Surfside grunted, I could tell he was trying his best to be polite, but his emotions seemed to be running high from our small spat from earlier. "Did you get here in that thing?" Surf asked pointing to the sky cabin.

"I think maybe I did." I replied. "But I can't remember for sure."

"Hmm." Said coast. "I've heard ancient stories of people crossing over to other worlds, and when they do they can't remember a thing. Maybe you're like them?"

"I don't know." I replied. "Maybe."

"Or maybe Surf hit you in the head so hard that you lost all memory of everything?" Declared coast as she scowled at Surfside.

"Oh please." He replied, rolling his eyes. "I barely touched him."

"Well, he can't remember anything!" she snapped back.

"I couldn't remember anything last night either." I added. "I think my memory disappeared last night, all I can remember is remembering and then not remembering."

"That doesn't make any sense!" Surfside Disputed. "How is it possible to remember remembering that you don't remember anything???"

"I know." I whined holding my face between the palms of my hands. "Nothing makes sense anymore!"

"It's so strange." Said Surfside as he pulled Coast aside.

"What?" Coast asked.

"Well, he's defiantly a grown man." Surfside whispered. "At least thirty years old, but it's almost like he's lost all of that, like he's some kind of child... like he's lost the memories that come with being an adult."

"Maybe he has?" Coast added.

"Hmmm..." Surfside Pondered. "This is very strange."

"Yes." Coast replied. "Very strange indeed."

Coast came to me patting me on the back telling me to cheer up, that they'd help me find my memory.

"How can we do that?" I asked.

"Well first things first..." Replied Surfside, finally warming up to me. "You should check your pockets. Maybe there's something that can refresh your memory."

I emptied out my pockets but there was nothing much, a red handkerchief, a strange looking glove and a wallet, which Surfside grabbed right out of my hands.

"Look here, there's a picture of you printed on this weird hard paper... It's in color too! So your name IS Michael.... Guess you're telling the truth. Says here that this is a driver's license! Hmmm... What's a driver's license?"

"I dunno?" I replied.

"Oh well." He shrugged. "Look! There's an address here! Buena park, California."

"Where's that?" I asked.

"I don't know." Surf answered. "I've never heard of it before... Must be a faraway land"

"Our friend the Farmer might be able to help you." Coast added.

“The farmer?” I asked.

“Yes.” Replied Coast. “His name is Mr. Knott. He’s a nice man, his farm is a little far, but he knows a whole lot about everything, and travelers go there all the time.”

“Oh yeah!” Surfside added. “Maybe he knows where this “Buena Park.” Place is?”

“Do you think he can help me find her?” I asked.

“Who?” Coast replied.

“I don’t know, but I know she’s waiting for me, and I need to get to her.”

“Is this her?” Said Surf pulling a picture out of my wallet. It was a picture of a woman. The woman from my dream!

“That’s her!” I replied. “I dreamt of her last night!”

“She’s very pretty.” Said coast. “Look! There’s a ring on your finger, maybe your married to her?”

“I think I am.” I answered. “Do you think the farmer can help me find her?”

“Well, I don’t know about that.” Surfside speculated. “But he might be able to help find someone who can, maybe even get you on the right track to finding your memory again.”

The two decided that they would help me. That they would take me to see the farmer so I could find my way home. The three of us headed up the beach.

Coast decided that we should eat before our journey, Surfside asked me if I had ever fished before.

“I don’t know.” I replied.

“That’s right.” Surfside laughed slapping himself on the forehead. “I forgot you can’t remember anything.... We’ll show you how.”

The three of us sat on the edge of a long pier. Coast let me use her fishing pole instructing me how to use it.

“Okay Michael.” Said Coast in an encouraging manner. “Cast your line out.”

With both hands I swung the pole behind me then let my line fly out into the ocean.

“Now what?” I asked.

“Now we wait.” Replied Coast.

It wasn’t long before I had caught a fish, Coast helped me reel it in. It was rather small. I took it off of its hook and it flopped around on the wooden pier.

“Too small.” Said Surfside. “Throw it back so it can become a big fish someday.”

Gently I picked up the small fish intending to release it back into the ocean, but the slippery thing was so frightened that it wiggled and squirmed out of my fingers. It flopped around on the wooden pier, then back into the water it went.

I didn’t like fishing, I felt bad for the little fish, I think it was scared and alone, I was glad it got to swim free again.

Not long after, Surfside caught a huge fish and killed it immediately.

“Don’t want to let it suffer.” He said. “It’s the law of nature to consume life. But make the kill quick so the life doesn’t suffer.”

The two showed me how to build a bon fire, we cooked the fish over the fire and ate.

“That fountain?” I asked. pointing to the green fountain I had seen earlier.

“What about it?” Surfside replied.

“Is it supposed to be there?” I asked.

“We don’t know.” Coast weighed in. “My Mother once told me that this fountain is one of many, but they are so old, and the others are so far away that nobody knows much about them.

It’s pretty, isn’t it?” She added.

“Yes.” I agreed.

“Well, if you think that’s cool then check this out.” Said Surfside pulling up the sleeve of his jacket and revealing a strange silver band. “Ready Coast?”

“Okay!” She answered.

The two stood up and took a step back from the bonfire.

“Transports!” The two shouted simultaneously. A bright light flashed out from the arm of Surfside’s jacket. Another bright light flashed from another metal band wrapped around Coast’s ankle. Suddenly out of the sand came two large objects. Weird transports you could ride in. One was painted orange, it floated above the ground and had two wings on it, one in the rear and one in the front, the front could move side to side so it’s driver could steer. The other was some sort of land buggy that could seat about four people in it. The land buggy was painted red, oddly enough it had no steering wheel.

“What are these?” I asked.

“Our rides.” Surf smiled. “Mine, the one floating there, is called a Glider, and that one there, well I don’t know, Coast never named it.”

I was amazed at what they had just done. How did those small metal bands bring out these large transports from the ground? It was like magic!

“Well...” Said Surfside. “We should head out while it’s still early, if we want to make it to that farm on time.”

“One of us has to stay behind.” Coast insisted. “Someone has to protect the beach.”

“I’ll do it.” Replied Surfside. “Nothing gets past me.”

“What are you protecting the beach from?” I asked. “There’s nothing here.”

“Your right.” Surfside answered. “There is nothing here, but there used to be. People used to come to this boardwalk from all over enjoying this beach, but now they’re all gone.”

“What happened to them?” I asked.

“Nobody knows. That’s why Coast and I are here. To investigate what happened, to find out what took them and to stop it from happening again.”

“Maybe whatever took them is gone now?” I asked. “It doesn’t seem like there’s anything here.”

“Oh but there is.” Surfside Replied. “Something big, something evil. I used to have more gliders and it took them all.”

“Where is it?” I asked.

“Somewhere deep in the water.”

“What is it?”

“We don’t know...” Surfside whispered. “It has yet to reveal itself.”

“How do you know there’s something there?”

“I can feel it. People like Coast and I can feel where these types of things are... That’s why we are here protecting the beach. I think it knows we’re here too... Once it reveals itself. I’ll be ready for it.” He took off his jacket and showed me more of those weird bracelet like bands on his arm.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Operators bands of course.” He declared. “They can only be used by operators, and only certain operators can use them. This is how we protect the boardwalk.”

“You’re an operator?” I asked.

“I sure am! ...So is Coast.” He added. “But she only just found out she’s an operator, she can use them okay, but I need to teach her much more.”



"I know a lot already." Coast added.

"Am I an operator too?" I asked.

"Do you have any Operators bands?"

"I don't know." I answered.

"Well, check your arms." Surfside insisted as he rolled up my sleeves looking for operator's bands, but my arms were bare. Just brown skinned arms.

"Sorry buddy." Surfside sympathized. "I don't think you are, but that's okay, most people aren't. In fact, operators are very rare."

## News from the pony express.

After eating breakfast with the two, Coast and I set out for our journey. Surfside and Coast said their goodbyes giving each other a great big hug. Coast and I hopped aboard her buggy transport and headed away from the beach. The terrain slowly changed as we traveled into what were now grassy plains.

Coast's little buggy moved rather quickly. There wasn't much to see along the way Just long blades of brown grass flowing with the wind. The buggy would speed through them leaving a trail of crooked grass behind. Soon enough we came to a small hill which the buggy scaled effortlessly, beyond the hill were more plains but these were livelier than before. The grass seemed to grow greener the further we traveled here, but as the terrain changed so did the sky. Soon enough dark clouds began to form in the distance. They were extremely far off and lightning would occasionally flash from them followed by long delayed thunder.

"What is that?" I asked. I didn't know I had seen a storm before.

"A storm." Coast replied.

"What's storm?"

"A storm is cold, it's windy, it's rainy, and there's thunder and lightning too!"

"I don't think I like it very much."

"Well, It's necessary" She replied.

"Necessary?"

"Yes, it may seem scary, but it's necessary. Without the rain nothing would grow, and there would be nothing to drink, and if there were nothing to drink everything would die... Don't be afraid of it, it's too far to get us from here anyway."

We were moving further away from the storm, but I kept an eye on it the whole time. The land began to change again, this time there was no grass at all, just dirt. Everything began to feel eerie now. Coast decided to distract me by letting me drive, which she found strange because I was rather good at it.

"Maybe you ARE an operator? She said with a smile.

"Maybe." I laughed. It was fun driving her little buggy, all I had to do was think which way I wanted the buggy to travel and the buggy would do it, that's why there was no need for a steering wheel.

We drove for a while and the sun began to shine down upon the land now. The storm was so far we could barely see it now.

Suddenly we began to see something else... Something off in the distance. I couldn't exactly tell what it was at first, but Coast knew and made me stop the buggy.

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