

Ajalon

An old man sat rocking quietly on the front porch. Lost in his thoughts, he paid no attention to his young grandson watching him so intently. The sun was setting over the nearby hills.

The young grandson watched as his grandfather almost willed the sun to go down with the power of his sad gaze. The young lad noticed his grandpa's thumb would twitch a little bit, just at this time of the evening. Just when the sun was almost down, when you knew in 10 minutes it would be dark, it would begin its fervent twitch.

"Grandpa?"

The old man startled away from his gaze at the sun and his thoughts. "Oh! Erm, hrrmm...excuse me lad. What is it?"

"why do you stare at the sun like that every evening?"

The young man was disappointed on having his question unanswered, as his grandfather was back to gazing at the sun. The lad waited until he could no longer see the sun. There was some light left, but very little. He could see his grandfather was relieved.

"Graaandpaaa" said he, tugging on his grandfather's sleeve.

"What? Huh? Who? Oh, yes. It's you my son. What is it?"

The young man shrugged off his grandfather's forgetting his was even there, and pressed on with his question.

"WHY do you stare at the sun like that every evening?"

"Stare at?? The sun? Oh..erm..hrrmm.. well. I spose I...have I never told you the story?"

"WHAT story?"

"I spose it is something I do not like to talk about. Perhaps you are old enough to hear about it now. There are many who don't believe it, but I was there. I saw it with my own eyes. Many of them did too, but it was far too incredible. Time makes us forgetful and doubtful I spose."

"Grandpa, saw WHAT? What did you see?"

"Yes, quite so lad. Sit down right here now and I will tell you the story."

The already seated lad, just blinked at his visibly disturbed grandpa.

“Ah yes, you are sitting. Well. It all started when I was back in the army. A fine regiment I was in, one of the best. I served very proudly. One day we had joined up with the armies of four other kings.

You see, there was a new people invading our country. I don’t know where they came from, Egypt, or to the south somewhere. Desert people, drifters I heard. Well, they crossed the river into our country one day, and started warring on our cities. They conquered two big cities in no time at all. Well, there was no small stir among us. We were on full alert. Then we heard word that one of our cities had made peace with these new strange people.” He spat on the ground in disgust. “Traitors”

“Go on Grandpa. What does this have to do with how you watch the sun set every night?”

“The sun? Oh yes, the sun sets every night... every night. Except....” The grandfathers words trailed off.

“Grandpa! Finish the story. Please?”

“Well, as I said, my king and four other kings got their armies together to go pay a little visit to these traitors of our land that joined up with the strangers. We meant not to pay them any kindness either. We were hot they would join up with them. We put all the regiments together and marched right down there.

Somehow, they sent word to their new friends that they were in trouble. Well, there was quite a battle that began the next morning!

We fought very bravely, my regiment and I. My captain was gravely wounded, and I ordered a litter to take him to safety. As second, I assumed command and ordered a full attack with my regiment.”

The old man began to stare off again. His facial features began to change in the last shreds of light the evening held.

“Well lad, we fought till we just couldn’t fight any more. All around my comrades were falling. I’d never seen such a fierce battle, nor have I seen such destruction to one army, and not the other. It’s as if...as if...as if God was with them people, and He was fighting against us Hissself!”

“Grandpa, why would God fight against you and your army?”

“I don’t know son. I just don’t know. I reckon that land really was supposed to be theirs. That was nothing compared to what was about to happen.

Well, I don’t mind telling you lad, I begun to get real scared. I’d never seen so many fall at my side. Oh sure, battles are always bloody. You lose friends in almost every one of them. But this...this was different. Well, I ordered a full retreat. The eeriness of it all got right under my skin. We started to skedaddle out of there. I directed my men to the cover of some nearby hills. I knew that if we could survive until dark, we could slip out of there unnoticed. I reckoned we had a half hour or so before the sun would be gone, and we’d be safe.”

The old man shuddered suddenly as if caught by a bad cold chill. The young lad lit a lantern and hung it on the porch lantern hook. The lad noticed his grandfather's face had paled, and there was a look of fear and shock on his face.

"Grandpa, are you ok?"

"Lad, most don't believe what I'm about to tell you."

"I'll believe Grandpa, I really will! I love you grandpa."

"I love you too. Boy, I want you to know, never forget what I am about to say to you - God is real. I've seen Him. Never doubt that. Never go against Him"

"You've seen God?"

"Well, I've seen what He can do. It's the same thing.

That evening up there in them hills, being pursued by the enemy, I was confident we could get away from that horrendous battle. I was so sure we could survive, if we just ran hard enough. The night would over shadow us and we'd be safe.

Then the rocks began to fall."

"Rocks fell?"

"Aye lad, rocks. Rocks from a clear sky...fell right on top of us, they did. Stones such as you've never seen fell like rain. I thought the battle behind us was bad. I never seen such destruction until them rocks began to fall. There was no hiding from them. How can a man dodge the rain drops? How can a man dodge them when they're stones?

That's not the worst of it though lad. Not the worst at all.

The sun. It...just...stayed. It didn't move lad. Not one bit. It's as if time itself froze that evening. I could have sworn we had thirty minutes until dark when we began to run. We ran for hours. Few escaped. It seemed like the Sun was commanded to stand still, right over Gibeon. I began to notice the moon too, as I skirted the cliffs. It just hung there, right over the valley of Ajalon. Lad, I tell you that the sun never went down until our army was totally defeated.

That's why I watch the sun go down every night. I can't escape it lad. It just doesn't make sense.

God Hissself fought against me and the army I was in that day. I don't reckon there was ever a day like it before, and I hope there will never be a day like ever again."

"I believe you grandpa," the lad said, "I believe you."

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