

### The Lost Stories from History

The sky's engulfed with light, blinding everything around me. I wake up sweating, wondering about the absurd dreams that fill my mind this time. I look at the clock seeing 6 am bold across the face, peering at me like a cat. I lazily leave my bed, and put on my fuzzy green slippers. As I walk to fulfill that longing for a single drip of coffee, I stop suddenly, dead in my tracks. Through the window I see a huge contraption, which peaks my interest. I ran out, instantly regretting not wearing a jacket. The ground is covered with a light fluffy snow, and the stars are sparkling through the early morning. I walked up to a silver box-shaped contraption with a door that seemed easy enough to open. I open the heavy door to see a bench with a blanket and a single pillow. I let curiosity take over, and I sat down inspecting the inside. I looked across to see four buttons which were 4 shades of blue, each one lighter than the last. I was puzzled, thinking about the possibilities of each of these buttons. I logically thought about how to proceed. My conclusion pointed to only one answer: press all four. Nothing happened of course; this was an absolute waste of time. I sat there disappointed and confused. I started to stand up, until I accidentally tripped on this weird lever located beneath my feet. BAM! I suddenly am pushed backward from the force of the machine, and everything around me begins to spin. I was suddenly thrown back on the bench. At this point, I begin to open the door, and stomp to complain to my mom about her stupid purchase.

I step out to see fluffy snow on the ground, but I also see wheel tracks across the ground. As I began to look up, I saw huge white wooden houses. Panic starts to set in, and my whole body begins to swell up. Where am I? I look around to feel tiny wet droplets form under my eyes. I sat down in the freezing snow and wondered if I would ever see my mom again. I look to

my left to see a man handing me a jacket. I gradually begin to smile and accept the thinly sewed jacket, while I begin to stand. He leads me to a fire with beans warming up in a pot. I sit down on the log, and I watch many people pass by with disgusted looks. I look down, thinking of my weird green shoes, improper, in such a rugged place. The man hands me coffee and gives me a warm smile. He was a tall African American man with a white cloth shirt on and sewn black pants. He had dark brown eyes and a bright white smile. He leans over and whispers into my ear saying "It's okay. They are looking at me with disgust." I suddenly move back, wondering what he has done. I look at him and say "Are you a murderer?" His eyes widen and he says, "No, do you see the color of my skin" I start looking around in disgust. Who are these people to judge? I look him dead in the eye and ask, "Why?" He gives me a questionable look and says, "I do not know." We both sit quietly as the snow proceeds to fall; he begins with his story.

"When I was younger, I grew up in a log cabin with many others. As a child, I would be watched after by older women in the slave quarters. At ten years old, I saw the true horrors of what my people were going through. When I was ten, picking cotton in the brutal heat would be my new job. I would wear a cloth shirt and trousers to protect my body as I work in the blistering sun. One time, when I was sixteen and picking the cotton, I heard trots slowly behind me. That day was extremely hot, so I was slower than usual. I heard a man walk behind me, and then the whip cracked on my back and tears started to roll down my face. That day I knew I needed to leave and never come back. I had no idea what to do. I memorized the schedule of the owner, and made my plan to escape. It was the middle of the night, when I started running. I made it to the beginning point of the house, Looked back one more time, and ran. I ran faster than I had ever before. The ground was rough on my bare feet, and I was running to new possibilities. I felt like I ran for hours and hours. I walked for days, hiding and eating food in the woods. The next time I

went into a city, I saw a sign saying "Kansas." I had finally made it into a Union state, where freedom was granted. I slowly started to get my life back. People still stared, but it was worth it. I began to work at a job on the railroad and would earn money. One day at work, I heard that the Union had conquered the Confederacy, and the slaves would be freed. After that, education was slowly granted to us, so I decided to take classes on how to read and write. My skills were elementary level, and missionaries and churches would provide the classes for us. I started reading the Bible and would write letters to my work friends. As my learning increased, I started to attend meetings to give rights to my people helping with the Equal Right League. People still treat me terribly, but I'm going to fight to become equal." I sat there in tears, thinking of all the things he went through. A beautiful woman came up to him and said, "Are you ready to go?" He looked at me and tipped his hat, and disappeared into the darkness. My stomach grumbled, as I grabbed a spoon full of beans. As I look around, I see a man across from me, who kept to himself. He looked up and said, "Hi, can I have some beans?" I looked at him with a full mouth and nodded my head. He looked at me and asked, "Are you an immigrant, too?" I gulped my food and proceeded to say, "Yes, do you have a story?" He nodded slowly and said "Yes."

"It all began when Anson Burlingame became the U.S. minister in China. He presented the Burlingame-Steward Treaty, letting Chinese immigrants legally travel to the United States. I had just recently graduated from Tongwen Guan, which helped me learn English, and I wanted to travel. This provided me an opportunity to travel in the United States. I decided to visit the U.S. because I had heard the crazy stories about gold in California. I packed up my bags and left on a steamboat that day. As soon as I stepped on that ship, my beloved home would disappear. This trip took ten to twelve weeks, and I learned the hardships of travel. There would be nights with the waves crashing against the ship that I wished to be back in China. When I arrived in

California, I could see tall buildings, and feel the sunshine on my face. I stepped off the ship, and my body exploded with excitement. I would go up to people and say 'Hi' in English. As I walked through the city, people in suits and tights would give me a look. I was in traditional Tibetan clothing, with long sleeves and a high collar. I soon found out that the Gold Rush had passed and decided I needed to get a job. I decided to pursue a job in a slaughterhouse. I would spend hours earning money and lived in a shack, where many others lived also. I lived in San Francisco for many years, until I wanted to move. Last year, I decided to move toward Texas, so I quit my job and moved out. That is why I am here. I have been traveling for many months, and I am almost there, to settle down and meet a lady. I never regret moving here, but it was an obstacle, leaving everything I knew.”

My mouth drops, a man who traveled hundreds of miles just to be here. The snow has completely stopped now. My Tibetan storyteller looks at me and says, “Kahleh phe.” He smiles, and then takes a handful of beans, and walks away. My smile fades, as doubt creeps into my mind about ever going back to 2024. I put my face in my knees and try not to cry. The next thing I know, there is a warm hand on my back. I look up to see a man with a crooked smile and antebellum charm give me a worried look. I suddenly perk up and ask if he wants any beans. He slowly sits down, and says “No, ma’am.” Suddenly I jerk back and ask, “Ma’am? Do I look old to you?” He laughs and shakes his head. I look to the left of me and see a chocolate brown horse nibbling his feed. I give a little rub on the nose and look back at the mysterious gentleman. I ask him, “I bet you have a story, don’t you?” He looks at me and says, “I do, Ma’am. Do you want me to tell you about it?” I slowly nod my head, and he begins quickly. “I was born in San Francisco in 1840. My father moved there, hearing that there were possibilities at hand. I grew up with a dad out seeking gold, and a mother who stayed with us. As a child, I would hear my

dad constantly talk about gold, and all the things he planned to do with it when he found it. My mother would trust my dad, even if he could not find anything. When my father started mining for gold, I knew I never wanted to become my father because I wanted a stable life. So that is why I am here now. I'm headed to start traveling on the Oregon Trail. There have been rough patches along the way, but I'm ready for it. I have met some Indians who were kind but warned me on what is ahead. I want to live on a farm with land, while providing for my family. The Homestead Act lets a person over the age of twenty-one receive 160 acres with a little fee. I worked in the mines until I received that money, and then left. I am ready for The Great American Desert.

I was flabbergasted at this story, and right when he ended, the sun was creeping upon us. He looked at me and said, "Ma'am, I probably should get going." I slowly nod my head, and head back to the time machine. I stepped into it, but the lever had disappeared. I tiredly pressed the lightest blue button, and I felt a jolt of lightning travel through me. When I walked out, the ground was filled with snow again. I looked up to see the sun slowly rising in the clouds. I saw my house 25 feet away from me, and I leaped for joy. I ran across the snow in my fuzzy green slippers and entered the house. Everything was just as I left it. I shucked my wet slippers and jumped into my bed. As I lay my head on my pillow, I couldn't stop thinking of all I had heard that morning.

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