

I Suspect It Is Here For Me

by Jack CJ Stark

I suspect it is here for me. This is the third night in a row it has sat in the same spot. As I look out of the window, I can see it perched on the roof of number 12. Patiently waiting. Are owls known to be patient creatures? Wise, maybe, but does that equate to patience? I don't think so. The owl is not looking around, hunting, or nesting. It just sits there, looking at me. Watching me.

I'm not sure why it is watching, or how long it will be there. Maybe it will wait until I am ready. It must be a pretty boring show. I don't really do much, except sit on my bed, read, and kill time. There isn't much else for me to do. If it had visited just a year ago, it would have seen that I had lots of hobbies and activities. I would go to my office job through the day, and then engage in recreational activities of the evening. No! Nothing like that. Keep your head out of the gutter. I have never really had much interest in sex and romantic relationships. Instead, I filled my time with honest hobbies and social clubs. Badminton on Monday, Tai Chi and Meditation on Tuesday, Astronomy Club on Wednesday, Thursday was the local Police Advisory Board, or the Book Club, and Friday was the Photography Club. Weekends were full with volunteering at the local bird watching beauty spot and some R&R. It was a busy life, but one I enjoyed greatly. Although I didn't have romantic partners, I had a lot of friends through the clubs, and I would spread my time with them evenly.

That was in the past though. Since the incident I have found it difficult to keep up with it all. It started with me just not going to a club night here and there, and that grew into a regular thing, which extended into having two or three nights off a week, and then steadily dropping each club one by one. The desire to stay in the house and read or watch TV grew stronger over a relatively short time. Now I do nothing. I avoid people and interactions, and, as much as possible, leaving the house. It's a good day if I can just leave the bedroom.

The bedroom became a safe space. A space where I could be alone, with no distractions, and without the pressure of performing for other people. No social expectation to do this, or do that. In my bedroom I was free to sleep through the day and be awake through the

night. I could listen to music, or play my guitar, or read a book, or spend too much time on social media, or binge watch TV shows, or play video games. Anything I wanted to do, when I wanted to do it. For a time I felt like I was free to be me. Living a life of indulgence. But the situation quickly lost its novelty feeling. And before I knew it, it became a lonely, miserable, poor life.

The room that was once a safety blanket is a suffocating stranger to me now. A bed, an iPad, a small pile of clothes, and a few other items make up my worldly possessions. I used to have much more. So much so, that it is not an exaggeration to say I could have been considered a hoarder, but I managed to get that under control. I managed to build a normal home with shelves, and books, and all the mod cons, and tables, and chairs, and cooking pans, and side tables, and lamps, and all the things that give the impression someone is living a stable life. It's been difficult letting go of those materialistic possessions. One room at a time. Many donations to local charities. It's not been easy, but it has been necessary. There is little point in keeping personal belongings now.

When people have asked, I have told them I am moving away, to a new life on the Isle of Man. But that's not the truth. The truth is that I am moving on. I made the decision a number of weeks ago. I have found that doing so has brought me some unexpected comfort. I felt a weight had been lifted. The constant worry of whether I was 'living' and of what the future held dissipated. It gave me a sense of control back in my life. I even had a moment of reconsideration. That was until I realised the feeling of being content came from the knowledge that it will soon be over.

I've heard wild owls before, but this is the first time I am seeing one. It doesn't move when I shine a torch at it. It just stares, unflinching, like it's made of stone. The unbreaking eye contact comes with a wave of relaxation. I could spend hours watching it, watching me. It's eyes glow like hollow furnaces on fire. Nothing else matters when I look into them.

There was a time when I would have been amazed at the sight of an owl. I would have giddily rushed for my camera and spent the whole time it was in sight framing and taking shots. I would do that with anything interesting or out of the norm. I was so concerned with recording a memory of an event that I neglected the space and time to allow the memory to form

in my mind. I have many photographs of false memories. I'm not going to get a camera this time. I'm content with just looking at the beast.

This is my third night with the owl. The first night I thought it was pretty cool. I played some owl sounds to it to see if it would respond. It didn't. I kept going to the window and looking at it. When I woke the next day it had gone from my mind, and I didn't think about it again. But that evening when I was closing the curtains I saw it again, in the exact same spot. I wondered whether it had been sat there all day. I was concerned, thinking it might have been ill, and in need of some help. I looked for it today, but it was not there. It must only come at night. It is not in need of help. Instead, it is here to give help.

I know this because it just told me so. I had tried communicating with the owl by flashing lights and playing owl calls to it. I even stood at the bedroom window flapping my arms. I must have looked silly. All I needed to do was watch back. Build a rapport by matching its behaviour. I welcomed its calming energy, and when it saw I was ready, it spoke. I don't know how. It doesn't have lips to move or a voice box like humans. It's not screeching at me across the road and through the window. Instead, it speaks to me by thought. By sharing knowledge without using words. It imparts wisdom.

The owl just asked if I wanted to know a secret. Of course I do. Who doesn't like a good secret? Now I understand. The biggest mystery of them all is the nature of a conscience, or a spirit, if you will. A thought is nothing more than a blast of electricity within the brain. A current from one neuron, through a neural pathway, to another. That action causes a chemical release, which gives us a feeling. There is no mystery in that. The mystery arises when we ask, what triggers that initial blast? Where does that instinct come from? It can't be a thought, or electrical activity, because what causes that? And so on and on. The answer is the spirit. The mind. The life force contained within us all. It is trapped in our body. Trapped by the cells that give us our physical form. That's what life is; the coexistence between the body and the mind. Life cannot exist with one without the other. Life ceases to exist as we know it when the physical cells can no longer hold on, and they release the mind. There is no coming back from that. In that moment, and for all moments to come, the energy is free to exist without limitations. No more pressure. No more expectation to behave in a certain way. No more success or failure. Money,

jobs, family, friends, reputation, assets - none of it matters once we are free. Our energy becomes free, to travel through dimensions and realities. To share the same space as the gods. The owl is telling me it can give me what I have always wanted. It can help me achieve this freedom that I desire. It can help me exist in a natural form. It can help me find peace.

Initially I thought the owl was sick, and by choosing to sit on the roof of the house opposite me, had brought sickness into my life. Now I see that the owl is not a sign of sickness, but of being free from the sickness. The owl is a sign of progression, from one life, to something more.

I once read that an owl can hear the heartbeat of a mouse, whilst the mouse is underground. Remarkable. I wonder if the owl can hear my heart. Can it hear the sadness contained within? I am grateful the owl has come. I am blessed. Not everyone gets an owl. The owl says it will stay here with me until I am ready. Well, Mx Owl, I am ready.
