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Gerald Messier
Tennessee State University

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The Hidden Truth of Owensville

by Gerald Messier

Well, I guess ever since I maybe when I was six, I could remember my father kept a hard-working and deeply religious household where we were all expected to do our own share for the welfare of the whole entire town. Now this never seemed odd to me until, oh, about three weeks ago when me and my father went out to the old man Jernigan’s trading store in Olethea, this is when I discovered the truth about my family and about how everyone had lied to me throughout my life, from birth until just after my fifteenth birthday! The terrifying reason why I am certainly never setting my two pink Nike Shocks back ever again in the small rural town known as Owensville.

Daddy was a giant man with a bushy red beard that reminded me of the red and orange trees that lined the horizon. I can see him now chopping wood in the back of the house. His anger was revealed when he was chopping the wood for the town. It was as if he was taking every bit of his frustrations out on the lumber, sweat dripping, muscles flaring, and veins pulsing. It is a frightening image I will never forget. And even though I remained daddy’s little girl for the majority of my short life, I am now forever walking away from his home.

Owensville is a particularly boring place to live. There aren’t many things for a fifteen year old girl to do for fun, unless you absolutely love milking cows or shoeing horses. Our village elder, Owen, would often send daddy on a trip to Olethea to get whatever the town needed for the next month. Daddy had the two biggest horses in the town, Domino and Blackjack, and they were the only two horses big enough to pull the wagon with daddy and the town’s groceries. While our town did farm whatever we needed most of the time, they still
needed other man made items, like shoes and coats for when the weather grew cold. Whenever
daddy would make a trip to Olethea, all of the children would beg to go with him. I had always
wanted to go and had never gotten to. But on that day, I actually was chosen by daddy and got to
ride in the seat next to him while we rode to old man Jernigan’s trading store.

On the way there we discussed the different items daddy was picking up for the
Honorable Owen and the others. The Honorable Owen had a list of about forty different things
he requested along with the items the other families had requested. Daddy mentioned a coat for
the young lady of the Jackman house. There were only seven houses in our whole town and the
young lady of the Jackman house was my only friend. She was the only girl that was close to me
in age and wanted to play house with me, where we pretended we had our own house where the
Honorable Owen didn’t make all of the rules. When daddy found out we were playing the game,
I was forbidden to see the young lady in the Jackman house.

When we pulled the wagon up to old man Jernigan’s store, there was another family in
one of those auto car machines that Owen claims “are products of evil”. At least, they appeared
to be a family. There was a mother, a father, and a young boy possibly fifteen or sixteen. The
family went in the store looking somewhat frightened or perturbed by my giant ogre like father’s
appearance. As we walked into the store my father began to grab the different items the
Honorable Owen had requested, so I walked off on my own. While walking down an aisle of
fishing tackle, I turned my head and placed my eyes upon the greatest pair of shoes I had ever
seen. There on old man Jernigan’s trading store shelf in Olethea right next to some pairs of work
boots and the fishing tackle sat the greatest pair of pink Nike shoes I had ever seen. I’m not too
sure why, but I knew I had to have those shoes.
Those shoes set my heart racing. I wanted those shoes so badly I could scream aloud. Then a little voice in my head reminded me, *those would be forbidden.* And just as I was about to dismiss this crazy little voice, but then I heard it again. It was that boy who was with his family in that auto car machine.

“That would be forbidden where you are from, am I correct?” the boy asked. “I mean, you live in that crazy cult town where nobody has a first name but that Owen guy, right?”

I wasn’t sure what to say. I didn’t even know what a cult was. It was true that no one in my town had a first name except Owen, but, that was only because the Honorable Owen had said “first names were evil and against the true will of God”. I just simply replied to him, “What do you know about it?”

“My name is Jacob,” the boy said as he felt the need for introduction, “and I know that anyone in Owensville is ruled by that crazy Owen guy. My father says he was a minister for a church in Olethea, but started rambling on about how his name was the truth or the will of God and convinced some of the other townspeople to go live in the woods and start their own village called Owensville”. I know your father is Owen’s hatchet man who puts the children to death for Owen on their sixteenth birthday! Your father is terrifying!”

“That can’t be true,” I gasped.

“That’s what my father says. He says because they have no birth records for their children in Owensville, that there is no way for the government to find out if it is true or not, but it is”. My older brother Michael, before he went off to college, had a girlfriend who was from Owensville. They kept their friendship a secret and had planned on going out on the lake in our family boat on her sixteenth birthday. On her sixteenth birthday when Michael went to meet her, he claimed that he saw your father taking his axe and chopping off her head as the others from
your village rejoiced and drank in some sort of sacrifice ceremony. It freaked my brother out so much that he won’t come back to visit. He only writes to us now”.

“Oh my God! I have to leave. I can’t stay there waiting to die,” I said while crying uncontrollably. The boy just looked at me as if he was saying that he was sorry he couldn’t help. The boy’s father stood beside him as I cried and I turned up towards him and cried, “Is it true? Am I going to die soon?”

“No one knows for sure but it seems very suspicious that there are no adult children who live in Owensville. Your father or no one there has mentioned anything about a special event on your next birthday?” the father asked.

“Just that I’ll be an adult on my next birthday” I said while still sobbing uncontrollably.

My father then walked up and asked in a very stern tone, “What are you doing talking to these people? You should be ready to leave”.

I started to talk but I couldn’t. I wanted to say that I didn’t want to die and that they were animals, but I wouldn’t. I wanted to run away into the forest where no one could find me, but I didn’t. I just walked out of the store with my father and got back on the wagon, sat down, and cried.

My father sat down next to me and asked, “What did those people say to you?”

I just sat and cried.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Would you be okay if you just heard that your father cuts the head off of every child on their sixteenth birthday! Would you be okay if you just found out that everything and everyone you have ever known is a lie! Okay! Okay! I’m very far from okay!”
“It is true,” he said. “The Honorable Owen believes that society has corrupted the fairer of the sexes. I have been his executioner for the last seventeen years. When I do it now, all I think about is how am I going to go through with it whenever my own daughter reaches the chosen time. What will Owen do? Will God be mad at me for defying his will? I know it would be impossible to go through with. How will I do it? I have lost many hours of sleep with this internal discussion. I honestly dread that day and have considered destroying the Honorable Owen or even my own existence”.

I screamed, “Let me go then. I’d rather be alive and homeless than awaiting a death sentence. I love you all but this killing children for no reason is absurd. How could you?”

“Alright then, if you wish to leave, I will help you,” he said as he reached into his pocket and pulled out some money. “This is the rest of the Honorable Owen’s finances for this month. Take it. I will tell him that I spent it all inside of old man Jernigan’s trading store. I love you more than anything in this world and would never want to see you exploited, however, I couldn’t live with myself if I had to murder my only child”.

As I hugged my father and took the money I just simply said, “I love you dad”. He just smiled, rubbed my head, and said softly, “I know. I know you do”.

After saying goodbye to Domino, Black jack, and my father, I agreed to stay away from the village. My father said he would tell the Honorable Owen and the others that I had ran off into the woods and he couldn’t catch me. I had no plans of going back there to be killed so I went into old man Jernigan’s treading store and bought a few things I needed to survive. Jacob’s family inside the store asked if I would stay with them until I found a better place to stay, so I did. I’m going to a real school now and I see hundreds of kids everyday who are my own age. I even run for the track team. Every time I lace up these pink Nike Shocks I remember where I
came from, and I remember of how my father spared me my life the day I escaped from the hidden truth of Owensville.