

Connection

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Connection
Maggie Jones

Five

“Mommy, why is the sky blue?”

“Well, Alex, once upon a time there was a painter who had his shop in the middle of a town. Blue was his favorite color and so he had oceans, blue jeans, blueberries, and dolphins in the windows of the shop. As people walked by, he kept hearing them comment that blue is such a sad color filled with loneliness, darkness, and sorrow. This sunk the painter’s heart and he decided to show the townspeople what they were missing out on.

“The painter took his brush thousands of miles upwards, and started his work. He decided that if this huge canvas was all one color, people wouldn’t appreciate it as much, just like they thought his shop windows looked sad. So, in patches between his favorite color, he added white and grey splotches, and every 12 hours of work or so he would add pink, orange, and yellow, quickly followed by a deep, deep blue. But most of all, he added lighter blue. In between every other color added, there was always blue. After weeks and weeks of fluffy textures and hands covered with light blue paint, he went back to his town, stood outside of his shop and tilted his head up.

“Now, the painter was a smart man. He figured out a way to get his paintings to rotate. Different splotches of color were seen for different parts of the day. Some things, like the yellow, pinks, and oranges, would show up twice a day. While others, the white and greys were more mysterious, and would show up in different places, different times, and different days. But in between all of these, there was always blue. He figured people couldn’t think of blue as being sad anymore, since there was so much blue beauty right above their heads.

“You see my son, life, this world, and the things surrounding us have a funny way of being connected. Here, the townspeople, the painter, the sky, clouds, storm clouds, sunsets, sunrises, and colors are all connected.”

“Mommy, blue is my favorite color.”

“Thank the painter.”

Seven

“Mommy, why did my classmate say that there are eyes in the sky?”

“Because there are. There are eyes in the sky. Crows, and robins, and eagles, and geese all have eyes. But, honey, your classmate is focusing on the wrong thing. People underestimate bird brains because they’re scared to admit the truth. The birds use their eyes, yes, but the images they see are then interpreted by their brain. Bird brains sort through this information and piece together who you are, what you do, what you like, what you don’t like, what your favorite food is, what you are thinking, what you are hiding. This information is way more dangerous.

“Try to make friends with the birds. Not only do they have eyes and bird brains, but they also have mouths. The birds are terrible gossips, and baby the trees love to listen. The tree’s ears are in their branches, which is why they grow so long, they want to overhear as much as they can. Birds land and build nests on these ears in exchange for beloved information.

“The trees love secrets. Leaves grow just so they can fall and spread your information along to the wind. At that point, your private information, your beloved secrets are whistled along for all who care to listen. And people care to listen.

“So son, yes your classmate is right. The sky does have eyes. If your secrets need to be out in the open, go at night when the eyes are closed and resting. Because the sky does have eyes, but it’s their connections that make them so terribly dangerous.”

Eight

“Momma, I just overheard the preacher tell the butcher that everyone over 80-years-old has dropped. What does that mean?”

“When did you hear that?”

“Ten minutes ago, in the town square. I was sitting on the one bench that’s behind that big oak tree and they didn’t see me. They were talking so fast, rushing to get out every word. I peeked around the tree towards the end of the conversation, and the preacher’s eyes were red and puffy. When they shook hands, the preacher’s hands were shaking. It reminded me of how Tommy looked when he came to school after his cat ran away. I wanted to ask the preacher if I could do anything to help, but when I got up the bench squeaked. The preacher and butcher were at the other side of the lawn when I

rounded the tree. Mom, what happened to the 80-year-olds? What should we be doing? Do they need help?”

“Alex, you always had such a kind heart. Everything is ok. Don’t worry. You know how last month I had to take my coat into Miss Hattie’s shop to get fixed?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I had to take it in because I’ve had the coat for many years. It was still a very good coat and kept me warm, but it had to get some alterations. The one button went missing, and it had a small tear in the right arm from when it got caught in the Jeffries’ door. I took my coat in to Miss Hattie’s and she just fixed it right on up.

“Alex, don’t worry about the 80-year-olds. When you get older, your bones and joints start to hurt. Maybe the 80-year-olds are just at their own version of Miss Hattie’s.”

Nine

“Momma, why do we have to leave?”

“Think of it this way honey, you know when you’ve been inside all day and you have energy you need to let out?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, that’s how our clothes feel, we’re going to take them on an adventure. Our clothes want to travel around, see the world, and be able to feel the soft breeze of a different place. They want to connect with nature in different locations. Now, remember what we talked about. This adventure, let’s call it a game. This game has very specific rules. When I say to be quiet, you can’t utter a word. When I say to run, you run. If I tell you to run ahead of me, go without turning back. Do you understand?”

“Momma, will we win this game?”

“I hope so.”

Nine and a half

“Momma, why did we have to leave Dad behind? Why are we running with less people than yesterday? What is the goal of this game? When will we go home? What is the connection between everything here? Why are...”

“Alex, remember the rules. It’s time to be quiet, not a sound. Move your feet as fast as you can and hold my hand. We can do this sweetie, no talking and...RUN.”

Ten

“Mom, what are those loud noises? The hills have been quiet for two days now. Why are there red streaks in the sky?”

“I guess the painter is questioning his favorite color.”

Eleven

“Mom, is Dad going to catch up to us?”

“Honey, when journeying to a new place, it’s helpful to remind yourself of the way your body is designed. Your eyes are at the front of your head and your knees only bend the one way. You’re biologically made to move forward. That’s what we have to do.”

“So, we’ll keep moving forward, but is he going to catch up?”

“Alex, you need to remind yourself of the connections. Your body, and this journey are connected—”

“—Mom, for once in my life, please just give me a straight answer. Will we see Dad again?”

“No.”

Seventeen

“Mom, are you excited to come see my final training session tomorrow?”

“Very much, you’re going to be great!”

“Is it okay that I’m nervous?”

“Oh Alex, sit down. Of course it’s okay. When you get nervous, your stomach does flips. It does this because it is a terrible drama queen, and wants more attention than you’re giving it. The rest of your body tries to help by getting the attention away from your stomach. Your hands start to shake because they’re trying to wave hi, the pressure in your head is your brain accidentally sending too many encouraging messages, and the thumping in your chest is trying to tell you to lead with your heart. Your hands, brain, and heart, are trying to help. They all dislike the stomach and are trying to lessen its effect. Your body is all connected.”

“Thank you Mom.”

“After your final session, I’ll meet you outside the activity room at the end of the bunker. Knock ‘em dead!”

Eighteen

“Mom, why are the red alarms going off? I thought we had more time. The emergency evacuation route is blocked. Is it possible it’s just a glitch in the system that’s making the alarms go off? How much time do we have left if it’s real? Mom, get up. We need to at least try to do something. Mom. Mom. Mom!”

“Alex, close the door and come sit close. It’s happening. There’s nothing more we can do.”

“There has to be something we haven’t thought of yet.”

“Come here sweetie, sit down. They’ve tried everything. Let’s just enjoy what we have left. There’s nothing more we can do. It’s happening. Take a deep breath. I am so lucky to have you as a son, you are so kind, and brave, and smart. I am so proud of you. Can I ask you a question, for a change?”

“Anything.”

“Why do you always ask *me* your questions?”

“Because they make me feel connected to you.”