

The Key to Wisdom

by Sam Rizzuto

Grandfather Owl gave a sigh and shuffled across the oak floor to the opposite side of the tree, near the opening where soft yellow light was streaming in. He gave a small start at the sound of wings beating the air, his own ^{w.c. or I'm unfamiliar with use.} pair puffing up in a defensive manner as he turned to face the owl who was perched in his doorway.

"Grandfather!" Came the excited squawk.

Two bright topaz eyes stared back at him from a rust colored face, the fledgling's mottled grey body nearly vibrating with excitement. With a huff of amusement Grandfather Owl tried to calm his ruffled feathers, quickly recognizing the young owl as his grandson.

"My boy, don't sneak up on me like that!" chastised the older owl. "You nearly sent me to an early grave."

"Sorry, Grandfather," chimed his grandson, not deterred in the least. He fidgeted from his perch at the entrance of Grandfather's home, claws digging into the sturdy oak beneath him, refusing to dwell on the thought of losing his balance and plummeting down the sharp drop behind him. Grandfather's alcove was located near the top of a lone oak tree, its branches carefully shielding the entryway. It was impossible to find unless you knew exactly where to look.

"Come in, come in," Grandfather ushered with a wing.

He led them away from the opening and towards the back of the room. Once both owls were settled comfortably, the younger owl gave his ^s Grandfather an imploring look

↓
only caps
when used
as a proper noun
(when used as his
name)

accompanied by wide eyes.

"Will you tell me a story, please?"

This transition seems a bit fast. The grandfather is surprised by his visit, but there is little dialogue before he asks for the story

Grandfather nodded in acquiescence and remained quiet while he gathered his thoughts.

"I was just a boy," he began, "barely older than you are now."

The fledgling sat stock still, attention fixed completely on the older owl.

"To this day I still don't understand what exactly drove us to war in the first place. War is a horrid affair and should never be enacted. Some would say it was to retain our standing as the most powerful clan around. Others would justify it as self-defense against the Ravens, who supposedly made the first move. Perhaps it was simply an act of dominance, or maybe we finally became fed up with the other ^{birds'} bird's harassment and retaliated. Whichever case may be the truth, it still does not change the outcome."

Grandfather paused before continuing.

word choice?

"The entire affair was one big, bloody hodgepodge. Feathers of speckled silver and dark onyx fell from the sky, barely distinguishable under the stains of vivid crimson. In the end, our differences did not matter. We all felt the same pain, bled for what we believed was right, and watched our comrades die. Both sides lost more than they could ever hope to regain."

The young owl trembled as the words painted themselves in his mind's eye. The images of violence and suffering surpassed even his most frightening nightmares.

"Looking back on it now," Grandfather continued, his voice ringing cold and clear with suppressed anger, "I am disgusted and horrified by the choices we made. So much

bloodshed, and for what? Dead loved ones and wounded pride? We gained next to nothing and lost almost everything. Back then I could somehow see the merit and justification in slaughtering our foes, simply because they were not on our side. Our commanding officers told us that it was for our benefit, that killing them would give us power and a sense of security in return. And I believed them."

Years of pain and suffering seemed to stretch in the following silence.

"I was short sighted and stubborn, with a black and white view of the world. In other words, a naive fool."

↳ work on wordsmithing in this clause.

Here he turned to regard his grandson with a hard and piercing stare.

"If you learn nothing else from this old man's tale, at least know this. Never do anything without meaning. Do not let others mandate what is right and wrong for you. decide for yourself."

↳ that goes against your values?

↳ Rather, just a suggestion

This reads like a fast transition.

Explanation: In this piece two Theories of War are ^{portrayed} mentioned, Realism and Pacifism.

Realism is a theory of war that views war as an unavoidable and necessary evil. ^{According to this theoretical framework,} Ethics and morals cannot be applied to ^{my understanding is that morals & ethics can't be applied to} such a gruesome concept and are regarded as elusive dreams. Pacifism is ^a the theory that regards war with heavy disdain and opposition, believing that ^{violence or violent conflict} ~~conflict~~ is always avoidable and should never be considered an option. The former is mentioned more heavily than the latter, as Grandfather Owl reflects upon his youth and the decisions he came to regret, however necessary they may or may not have been at the time. A glimpse of Pacifism can also be seen in Grandfather's word choice when he explains his personal shortcomings as a young boy and how adverse to war the experience made him. ^{that the state has to act in its own self-interest.}

Three strategies I had in mind when writing this parable were to emotionally attach the reader, leave them wondering, and hopefully offer an important life lesson. The first is a bit difficult to achieve but my aim was to describe both characters and make them relatable to the reader. We've all been the young fledgling at some point in our lives, curious about the past and eager to hear what it was like to live through ^{a different} that time period. The other two I tried to get in one go, the last line Grandfather ^{shares} speaks being both a life lesson and something to ponder.

^{✓ good.}
leaves the reader with

^{I really like the first part it leaves me with a clear picture.}
The way that I read your story makes me think that the state was not considering the morality of war (Realism) but that in the end the grandfather realizes that there are other options, and thus regrets his former actions?!?
↓
ie pacifism

Beautiful story. Very polished, well written, clear connections to theory, etc.

A few stylistic suggestions and a couple areas that read faster (or that seem to jump w/out enough transition)

Overall, great!