

The Elevator

DJ Kane

My friend John and I had just exited the subway at 42nd Street in New York City, on our way to the Garment District of to look around. We had a nice walk to make to 34th and 6th Avenue. The weather was in the 70's, a little breezy, a perfect day in October to walk. After the Garment District, we had plans to visit China Town, and make it a day after that. As we reached our destination, and we became aware of the many places being closed, some permanently, probably because of the pandemic. We were on 7th Avenue and were making our way towards Chinatown it started to rain, and John and me looked for a place to avoid the rain. We found this seemingly abandoned building, and ran in to take shelter. After a few minutes, I spotted an elevator in the rear of the building.

“John, I wonder if that elevator is still in working condition?”

‘Probably not’ he answered.

“Want to try it, it can only go two floors, that’s all this building has,” I said.

‘You go first, Doug, it’s your crazy idea, and it’s probably not working anyway. This building seems that it was abandoned for a long time.’

We moved towards the elevator, and I started to brush off the panel, which was very dirty to gain access to the buttons.

“Here goes, John” I said and I pressed the up button hard, getting no response. It was very hard to press. “John, how about we both press the button at once?”

‘It seems like it’s a no go, Doug. They seemed to have shut all the power off, but I’ll give it a go one more time’.

John put his finger on mine, and we pressed with all our might. The pain in my finger mounted as John pressed down as hard as he could on my finger, and all of a sudden, and not to soon for me, the door of the elevator opened, with little noise, with all its lights on, as if it was used that day, and every day, without interruption.

I looked at John and said, “We did it John!”

John looked at me surprised, as I was, and said, “Now what Doug? I’m not going in as I told you before”.

I said, “It’s only a two-story building. What can happen?”

John replied, ‘don’t care, you want to go, it’s all yours. But if you do, I think your crazy, I’ll wait for you to return, or not, I’m kidding, you’re still crazy.’

Without much hesitation or much common sense, I entered the elevator, and told John that I would see him in a few minutes, after I return from the second floor. I reached for the second floor button and the ride soon begun. As I reached the second floor, the door opened and I hesitantly stepped out of the elevator. To find that the surroundings looked familiar, a kitchen of a long time ago, as were the voice I was hearing from afar.

Just then, I turned to enter the elevator to, to return to John, and the elevator disappeared, it was gone.

A familiar voice from afar, was sounding much closer, 'Junior, get ready for your birthday party, go wash up.'

That was my Grandmother as she walked into the kitchen, from the dining room. Doesn't she see that I was old as she is, but Cherry her dog jumped on me, and greeted me as if she knew. I went to the bathroom and looked in the mirror and realized that I was that little boy that Grandma saw and loved.

All of a sudden the front door bell rang, and I thought it was John ringing the elevator, but I was wrong. It was the front door, and I buzzed in my Aunt Etta and Uncle Lewis as I did many times before, who had brought my birthday cake.

"Happy Birthday Junior", they both greeted me together as they handed the cake to Grandma who had returned to the kitchen to put the cake in the fridge.

The front door bell rang again, and this time it was my Dad, sober I hoped this time. "Hello Junior, and happy birthday", he said to me as he greeted me, bent down kissed and hugged me tight, so tight that I trembled, with amazement, as it never was before.

Grandma took out the cake and placed it on the table, and it had seven candles on it. It was 1948. It was so weird; I was at a seven years old birthday party with the mind of 79 years old, and with all the future stored deep in my soul, déjà vu. We sang Happy Birthday and Dad as always, put me on his knee and sang an old Al Jolson song, Sonny Boy. Every one retreated to the living room where my gifts were supposed to be.

Cherry and me were in the kitchen alone when my elevator suddenly reappeared to my surprise. I thought about it very seriously to not enter, but I was not of this time, my time had passed. With a tear, I pressed the down elevator button and the door opened. I entered with Cherry in tow, and told her she had to stay home, and had to go, this was her life. She of course was making it more difficult for me. She, with much more coaxing left my side and exited the elevator. I pressed the down button and the doors closed. As the elevator started its descent I thought of John, and the people he might have called because I took so long.

As the elevator reached the first floor the doors opened, and John's smiling face greeted me. "I'm surprised your still here John and alone? Figured you would be worried, and called for help since I was gone so long."

“Gone so long? It’s been about five minutes or so, and why would I call for help?”

“That’s all, five minutes I exclaimed?”

“What happened up there, Doug?”

“Nothing you’d believe. Let’s get out of here and continue to China Town.”