

WINGS OF WAR

Soul of Eagle

Died 1881, Wisconsin

The eagle has no fear of adversity. We need to be like the eagle and have a fearless spirit of a conqueror!

Joyce Meyer

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.

Mahatma Gandhi

Life seeks life and loves life. The opening of a catkin of a willow, in the flight of the butterfly, in the chirping of a tree-toad or the sweep of an eagle - my life loves to see how others live, exults in their joy, and so far is partner in their great concern.

Edward Everett Hale

Chippewa County Wisconsin, 1861

Once, I had simply been a fledgling snuggled amongst the comforts of my nest, a delicate craft of woven forest treasures and my eaglet sister my closest companion. In the early stages of my development, a native man of the Chippewa Indians known as Chief Sky hacked down the large pine in which my sister and I were closely huddled, attempting to capture us two young eaglets, crushing my sister in the process. Despite my parents' vicious attacks to dismay the Chief, I was taken captive as the sole surviving eaglet and bartered for a mere bushel of corn.

That marked the beginning of my involvement in the affairs of human beings.

Chippewa in August - Madison in September 1861

Within a short period after I was stolen, my body had significantly developed from the fragile thing I had been, almost having doubled in size. My dull fledgling feathers had darkened into a deep earthy shade of brown, my head turned a pristine white, and the milky colour of my eyes had intensified into a striking yellow. My keen eyesight had allowed me to pick out the finest details in my surroundings, from each thread of hair on a person's head to a solitary, unassuming mouse in a field 50 feet below. My appetite had become so ravenous that I was once again sold as my owner could no longer afford to cater to my essential nourishment as well as his own.

From there I was donated and sworn into the service of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry, notably known as the 'Eau Claire Eagle', a standing testament that forever filled me with pride.

By early September, the company had arrived in Madison where one of my fondest memories occurred; I was officially cemented into the hearts of the 'Eagle Regiment' by being given the honorary name 'Old Abe'. The quartermaster had ordered that a perch where I could roost be crafted in connection to the insignia shield so my bearer could pridefully showcase me on the battlefield.

While in Madison, the regiment welcomed an additional member; a volatile hound with the ill-suited name of 'Frank' as designated by the American troopers. He was a tolerable companion despite his constant rambling reminiscing over his previous "masters". What a naïve creature a dog is, to allow human beings to claim the title of superiority over themselves despite their loyalty which in any other relationship would see both parties earning an equal level of respect, rendering no animal inferior.

It didn't take long for any illusion of friendship Frank may have entertained to be destroyed, after I displayed ferocious hostility towards him for having made eager advances upon my afternoon meal of carrion and rodent. Admittedly, I was probably too stern towards him for he showed the utmost level of kindness, although I was unpractised at the art of fortifying friendships, with no experience even with another of my own species. Having been held in relative captivity by humans for most of my time in the world, I was admitted no interaction with others in the wild, my only solace found in the fond care of my bearers.

Farmington MS Battle, May 9th, 1863 (Corinth Battle)

The smog that had risen from the artillery had encompassed the landscape like a thick blanket, rendering even my keen eyesight useless; with every breath my lungs had filled with a vulgar tasting gas, which soured my lungs and made every breath a reluctant effort to survive. The siege lines peeked barely visible one hundred metres in front of where I had been tethered to my perch by a frayed hempen rope. In every battle perch had been positioned in sight of the barricade of soldiers, as a symbol of perseverance and strength if spirits should have faltered.

The sound of Soviet gunfire intermittently pierced the stifling silence, answered in response with the blast of a confederate cannon and occasionally a blood-curdling scream which signified the fall of an unidentified soldier. All was done in the name of "patriotism", an undisclosed beckoning into the welcoming arms of death.

In a sudden rush a menagerie of chaos broke loose from both sides, disbanding startled soldiers whilst the sergeants attempted desperately to reforge order amongst the ranks. Amidst the disarray, an attempt on my life had been made by insubordinate soldiers that were later found to had long conspired with the enemy.

My last recollection of the battle was the imminent fear of death as an ear-piercing shrill tore its way out of my body, alerting the infantry of the dire situation I had been faced with. I'd broken free of the bonds of the rope and circled my assailants, making threatening dives at their faces with talons outstretched. It had all come to an end when my reality had become overwhelmed by a blinding sense of white, hot pain searing through my body until the blackness had engulfed my consciousness. Although, right before my mind had entered a withering state of oblivion where no presumptuous thought was plausible, a final revelation had occurred to me:

Predatory blood naturally coursed through my veins; killing a beckoning for survival. My understanding on the circle of life was jarringly different to that of a human, thus I couldn't fathom the motives that would drive human-beings to kill one another when they should preside in harmony with themselves and thrive on the sustenance of nature's bearings. Is there truly a legitimate reasoning to support the follies of war, or is it just a ploy for the leaders of man to create rifts between societies to satisfy their cravings for entertainment?

And thus it eludes to the question; is man aware of the conjectural field of immortality and their place in the universe?

After the Battle of Corinth, 1863-1881

For what had felt like an eternity, I had floundered in the depths of an endless abyss that had engulfed me body and soul; every breath tainted by the devoid sense of loneliness that had urged my mind to succumb to the easiness of sleep. I didn't.

I had awoken to a strange sense of euphoria; my surroundings were illuminated in a glow that shone with a heavenly quality, a stark contrast to the blackness I had awoken from.

As my eyes had come back to focus, I'd been greeted by the gentle face of a kindly young man, despite the afflicting scars that tore their path across his face like the many rapid routes of the Flambeau River from which I was raised near as a fledgling. He was the sign delivered to me from the universe to signify that I was at home, even far away from the protection of the wild.

In the years after the Battle of Corinth, my mind had been swallowed by a wallowing despair; my freedom of flight had been cruelly taken away from me after the captain of the Eau Claire Eagles had ordered to have my wings and tail clipped. I had refused to acknowledge the scraps of carrion served before me and the usually immaculate sheen of my feathers dulled. The essence of my soul had been destroyed along with them, although the man with the kindly face had kept my sanity grounded. He had offered my mind a reprieve from the guttering focus of my suffering by reading to me nightly. One of the stories had caused me to ruminate earlier years in relation to my encounter with the hound Frank. The author had proposed that animals such as Frank are tamed to suit the desires of humans. This manipulated conformity is designed to only reveal the false face of the schemes and intentions of man, thus leaving the dog deluded to the falsity of the master to which they comply to with complete subservience. They are completely unaware of the repercussions of their loyalty, so is an animal raised by man borne of their own will?

It was something that I had pondered over the remaining fifteen years of my life. By 1866 I had officially been relieved from my service with the Wisconsin infantry, and had duly earned a title of nobility and valour amongst the humans. This act of gratitude had been a fond reminder that despite their many afflictions, humans could still be capable of respecting the other diverse forms of life. In compliment to this I was kept in a luxurious state of captivity in the capitol of Wisconsin up until my death. As my soul had slowly begun to depart from my body and sever all bonds from consciousness, I had welcomed the sensation with open wings. An eager willingness had encompassed me in that moment, for visions of the forest in which I was born had transformed in place of my surroundings and the gurgling of the river once again roared in my ears as my sister ruffled her feathers beside me.

I was full of gratitude, for my life had become interconnected with humans in such an intimate way as they had portrayed me as a symbol of life amidst a battlefield of death. Mayhap redemption is possible for man, empathy their guiding light to reconnect with nature, and foremost their souls.