

Train Tracks
And
The Spider and the Fly
By
K. E. Ward

Introduction

The two short stories I have for you here are, "Train Tracks," and, "The Spider and the Fly." An excerpt of "Train Tracks," is previously published in my book, *A Candle, a Goblet & a Crystal Ball: The Paintings and stories of K. E. Ward*. This previous version of the story was set in Camden, New Jersey, and Boson, Massachusetts, but I changed the setting to somewhere close to home: Seattle, Washington. I am from the Pacific Northwest, especially Seattle. I changed the setting so that I could provide more realistic details in the body of my work. Though the storyline and some of the places are fictional, I have interwoven real places with fictional ones to create a twisted friendship between two teenaged girls.

"The Spider and the Fly," is a genre I had never done before: horror. It is a very short story based upon the poem by Mary Howitt. In it we get a humorous look into the mind of a psychotic killer.

Enjoy reading these two very short stories.

-K. E. Ward

Train Tracks

Behind the Main Street bar on the lonely streets of Vancouver, Washington, in a little alleyway the kids called, "the place," Jackie Stevenson waited in the midst of thick clouds of smoke and dust, for her boyfriend to finish haggling with the Broush brothers and take her home. She could hardly wait for him to return, as two cocky dudes had already tried to hit on her while he was gone. She rubbed her hands against her arms, trying to warm them. Her stockings were warm, but not thick enough to defend against the chilly wind. Loud music pounded from the entryway of the club across the street, and in the night-time rowdy atmosphere, Jackie was afraid that she was going to get mugged, or, even worse. Shivering, she clutched her bag closer to her. The high heels had proven to be the wrong choice on a night like this. Andrew had been drinking again, and undoubtedly was trying to settle his gambling debts. If things went wrong, Jackie wanted to be ready in case she had to run, so she slipped off her shoes and placed them in her spider-decorated bag.

Multi-colored strobe lights cut through the smoke and exhaust of cars traveling down the street, the advertisements of Chase's Hot Spot. She was glad to have

finally escaped from her parents' place; after all, the tiny enclosure of a house was filled with the loud trills of yells coming from both directions. Jackie had known that they were not happy for a long time. Evidence of their discontent was showing up everywhere, including an angry little note that ended up in her bathroom as a reminder to take clothes to the dry cleaner's. Her older brother Sammy was already graduated from high school and living at home, and Sammy and their mother were having a number of battles from day to day. Not able to handle the fighting, Jackie decided to duck out, while still unnoticed, and go clubbing in the evenings.

From a distance, a train rumbled across, blowing its loud horn and rushing across the lonely streets where taxicabs and grocery trucks waited for it to pass. As a child, Jackie would follow those train tracks home every day from school, waiting until the last minute before the train would come before jumping to the side. She often wondered which people took the train and for which reason. She mused often about the various lives and reasons for travel, jotting down stories in her journal about people who took the train.

"Hey, girl." Jackie looked up. Above her was a girl, a bit taller than her, with short, brown hair and blue eyes

with a cigarette perched from the first two fingers on her right hand. She was wearing blue jeans and a ratty t-shirt with the faded word, "Queen," splashed across the front of it, and low-top Converse sneakers.

"Hey," she said, trying to sound tough.

The girl said, "Have you had enough of this scene?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I don't know about you, but this place seems kinda seedy. What's your name?"

"Jackie," she said, feeling shy.

"My name's Christine. Wanna go somewhere and hang out?"

Jackie wasn't sure what to say. She thought about the dangers of meeting strange people on the street, wondered why this girl would want to go somewhere with her when they had barely exchanged two words, and why she had chosen to approach her in the first place. "Yeah, sure, why not."

Christine's house was a dirty looking three-level split-level. She could almost call it, "seedy," although that was exactly the word she had just used to describe the scene in front of the club. In her room, Christine sat on the bed and cradled a red pillow in the shape of a pair of puckering lips, while Jackie sat on the couch, noticing the

posters of rock stars on the walls and the messiness of the room.

"Where'd you come from?" she asked. She didn't recognize her from school.

"I just moved here. I'm adopted."

"How old are you? I'm fifteen."

"I'm fifteen, too." And she looked it. Christine had a masculine quality about her, and she thought maybe she was a lesbian. Jackie wasn't a lesbian; she was straight. But this cool-looking girl across from her seemed to be everything she had never been: a bad girl. A troublemaker. A victimized daredevil. On the edge between innocent and criminal, Jackie shuddered to think what kind of problems she had had. She was fascinated by her. And yet, she was just a tad frightened by her. She could have been older, seventeen judging by her confidence, but Jackie knew better.

"I've never been adopted," she said. There was a long silence between the two of them.

"That's okay. We're all unique. Nothing to feel bad about. I don't mind it so much."

"Tell me more about yourself," she said.

They talked for a few hours. Jackie listened to Christine tell her story about how her biological father

had murdered her mother, and how all of her siblings had skipped town and disappeared. She talked about drug use in the family, how her father had cheated on her mother, and how she had been locked in the basement for three weeks. She talked about coming here, and how much she liked her adopted parents, and how much more freedom she got here, and how they bought her things.

Their conversation slowed, and after a few more minutes, Jackie said, "I guess I had better get going."

"Well, thanks for coming over. It was really nice to meet you. Come over again sometime and we'll have some fun. Have a good night."

Jackie walked out of the house still wearing her high heels and realized how cold it had gotten. She had a premonition that something dramatic was going to happen with this new friend, but she didn't know what that would be. She looked up sadly at the house. She really wanted to get to know her more.

The next day Jackie met Christine downtown, as a kind of mystical non-coincidence. Christine immediately motioned to her. "Come, this way," she whispered.

Behind the corner of the barber shop building, into the alley, Christine showed her three cases of beer and a case of wine.

"Where in the hell did that come from?" she asked. "I swiped it," she said. "But I don't want anyone to find me. Come with me. Grab a case of beer and a case of wine. Let's run."

They ran, and Christine yelled over her shoulder, her breath a little more labored after two blocks of running, "Let's go to my house."

And they did. Jackie caught her breath and set down the beer and wine. Christine set down the two cases of beer.

They collapsed onto the bed and sofa, and then Jackie said, "Christine, why did you do that? You know you could've been caught. Besides, how are we going to drink all of this?"

"We're not," Christine said, in a decisive voice. "But we're leaving the town. We're hopping a train up to Seattle."

"Why?"

Christine paused. "Jackie, I did something bad today."

Jackie was about to ask what it was, but she was frightened she wouldn't like the answer. From that moment

on she was Christine's friend out of fear. She would never leave her side, not because of love, but because she had no choice.

Jackie thought of herself as beautiful. She had long, next-to-black hair, and dark brown eyes. She would look at herself for long periods of time, wondering about her appearance and soul. She had a long heart-shaped face, not the darkest complexion, and her bones were on the smaller side, her frame an average frame. She also liked to think of herself as thin. She was like a walking skeleton, the apples of her cheeks prominent, her jaw defined, and the sockets of her eyes pronounced, although she was on the smaller spectrum of average weight for her height and age, which was 5'5". She would look at people with a hollow, pleading expression.

Christine was so different from her. Her frame was boxier, almost the way she imagined a man's would be. She was definitely taller, maybe, 5'10". Jackie looked at her on the train. She was likely a girl who had seen so much of life, but perhaps the wrong kind of life. She pictured shoplifting, drug addiction, murder, adoption, sexual abuse, and severe dysfunction.

Christine was sleeping. They had hopped a train about a half-hour ago, and time was moving along slowly. Jackie felt isolated and worried. What would her parents think? Would they call the police?

When they arrived in Seattle, the weather was overcast, with the light sprinkling of the beginning of rain. Jackie had nudged Christine as they were coming close to the King Street Station.

They both climbed out at the stop, trying to remain unnoticed by anyone. The unmoving ground startled Jackie. She felt the sensation of spinning, after having been in motion for so long. As far as they knew, they had gotten away with paying no fare.

The first man they encountered appeared below a street lamp outside of the station. In the light, the sprinkling of rain was a windy mist which swirled around him. He had very dark hair, and dark eyes. He was perhaps in his early fifties. He did not appear to be doing anything other than standing there, but when they came closer, Jackie could see that he held something in his hands.

They had intended to ask him for directions, and ask him if he knew of a safe, hidden place where they could stay. They hadn't come up with the story they would tell

him, but they decided they were not going to tell him they had run away from home, only that they were new here and needed shelter. He was the first person they had seen since hopping off the train.

As they came even closer, Jackie saw that he was carrying a deck of cards. But they were not an ordinary deck of cards. These ones had black faces on them, and one could barely see the suits and numbers.

"What are you doing, sir?"

"Well, hello. Nice night, isn't it? Where did you two girls come from?"

"We're from out of town," Christine said, taking the lead of the conversation, but the man winked at Jackie.

"Have you come a long way?" he asked.

"Why, yes," Christine said. "Very far." She said this vaguely, intimidating him with a stare not to ask anything more.

Then Jackie asked, "What have you got in your hands?"

"Cards!" he exclaimed. "Pick a card, any card. As you see, these are no ordinary cards. The faces are all black; therefore, how can I cheat at a game of magic? A quick glance would not tell me if I have chosen the correct one. Therefore, pick a card, any card, and it is my power that allows me to find your card once more."

Christine picked out a card, the Ace of Diamonds.

"Put it back anywhere in the deck," he said. And she did. He shuffled and shuffled again.

"And you will see that I did no glance at the card, nor do I have anything up my sleeve. My power to find the correct card is pure magic, and it is not a magic trick. My magic comes from the infinite, the dark, the night, and the day. My power comes from the deepest sensation of love in your hearts, and from the depths of your strongest hatred."

"I don't believe you," Christine said. "Magic is always a trick. No one has the power to do magic."

"Oh, but I will prove you wrong." And the man stared at Jackie. He shuffled the cards again, and then riffled them, so expertly so that the cards seemed to fly in the air. The two looked at them, mesmerized. Then, a card flew out, and he caught it with his right index finger and thumb, as the rest of the deck fell into his left hand. Also with his left hand he grabbed Christine's right hand. There was a sudden igniting of fire and a bright light. Music came out of nowhere, tunes of jazz and the piano. Colors tickled the air, and then it all disappeared.

The man showed Christine the card, which was the Ace of Diamonds. "Here you go," he said. And Christine was stunned. In fact, she looked frightened. The man told them

one more thing, looking at Jackie. "You two are looking for a place to stay," he said. "There's an abandoned lot with a shed nearby. You'll find shelter there tonight while it rains. No one will bother you. No one will even find out."

With wobbling legs, Christine appeared to run away, so Jackie followed her.

The next day they woke up and walked around. They walked around downtown for a while. They got to Pike Street and Belltown. There were a lot of people walking up and down the sidewalks, heading to and from the market. A man was playing his saxophone on the corner, and Jackie wished that she could put a couple of dollars in his case, but she had no money. "Christine, I'm hungry," she said.

"So, let's panhandle."

They were able to panhandle enough for a couple of sandwiches at the convenience store. They walked along, going up the hill from 2nd to 3rd to 4th. They began to see higher end shops and pricier-looking establishments. How it may have looked to the rich women and men, two dirty teenagers with ratty, old clothes, was embarrassing to Jackie.

They walked quite a long way, and finally made it to Aurora. At that point they decided to take the bus up

north, with their panhandling money. They saw the prostitutes walking along in their short skirts and high heels. They finally got off in Bitter Lake, where Christine said she had a friend.

The friend was a woman who looked like she was in her twenties. Her name was JaLinda, and she had brown, curly hair, extensions, and acrylic nails. She wore a lot of blue eyeshadow and red lipstick. Her perfume was sweet and strong. Christine and Jackie stepped inside her apartment, and it was covered with animal print and musical notes. The apartment was small and packed with decorative objects, including a crystal ball, elephant figurines, a hand-shaped ring stand, and multiple scarves hanging from hooks.

Christine asked her, "Mind if we stay a little while?" and she whispered into JaLinda's ear.

"Sure, sure," Jackie heard her say, quietly.

Jackie asked, "How long will we be staying here?"

"Don't ask any more questions," Christine said.

At this point, Jackie's mind drifted back to the "bad" thing Christine had done before they left. When the other two women disappeared into another room, Jackie reached for the telephone. But the two women didn't spend a lot of time in the other room. She heard them talking and laughing.

They came back in, but Jackie was not quick enough to react, and was caught in the act. She gasped, and then dropped the receiver.

But before she could turn and run, Christine lifted a gun to her.

"Christine, listen to me," she said. "Please don't kill me. I love you. You are my friend. But you betrayed me."

But Christine only said, "I don't love you. I could never love anyone. The first person I look out for is me. Everyone else is just second best. You, Jackie, are the third person I've killed in my life, and believe me when I tell you that I am capable of it."

"Why?"

"You wouldn't keep your mouth shut, honey."

At that moment the man they had met at first arriving in Seattle crashed through the unlocked door and grabbed Jackie. She heard a shot careening into the wall, but she and the man were running.

"Come, this way," he said. But the two women were following them. They jaywalked across the street to the other side of Aurora and ran further. But at that point Jackie realized he had a weapon, too, and when Christine, who had the gun, raised it to Jackie, the man shot and

killed her. Grabbing JaLinda, he tossed his cell phone to Jackie, at which point she called the police.

It turned out that not only had Christine murdered her own mother, about a year and a half ago, but she had also murdered her father, the day they left Vancouver. Her mistrust of Jackie was not just based upon evidence, but was also a conclusion she had made based upon time spent with her. Jackie decided she would go back to Vancouver to her family. And she also decided, after this long adventure, that she would not mourn Christine, because she did not love her, either.

The Spider and the Fly

He adored her. He followed her everywhere; to the gym, to her apartment, and to the studio, where she was filming her latest romantic comedy. She was a starlet. Georgianna Montgomery, the famous actress, was absolutely drop-dead gorgeous, and he wanted to get to know her more.

You see, she had been a child actress, too, starring in the now defunct drama series, "Our Family," which aired on television more than a decade ago. The premise of the series was about a humble Protestant family living in the country, raising eight children, and weathering struggles which never broke them apart, but made their love stronger than it ever was before.

She was also well-known for her shampoo commercials, in which male admirers would come and ask her out on dates, and every time she would say, "Sure, anything you want."

Georgianna was now eighteen, and she had won several parts in blockbuster movies. She had long, straight, shiny, dark blonde hair, and her eyes were a glistening cyan blue. Her makeup was perfect. Her looks were perfect. Her body was perfect.

And Gary wanted to kill her.

But first, he wanted to romance her. So he found her fan mail address.

He started sending her gifts. The first gift he sent her was a red heart necklace with a long chain, from a

secret admirer. The second gift he sent her was a jewelry box embossed with many feathers and had a white jewel in the center. The third gift he sent her was a gift basket filled with all sorts of tasty jams, maple syrup, crackers, and pancake mix.

They were always from a secret admirer. You see, he was very careful not to leave any clues about his identity. He loved the actress so much, but he just wanted to slit her throat and cut her up into thousands of pieces. She was just too beautiful to live.

So, one day, he sent her a love letter: his first.

"Dearest Georgianna,

I have loved you all of my life. You are the most intelligent, beautiful woman I have ever known. Georgianna, you are the brightest jewel that has ever been on the earth. I could swoon for love of you. I adore you so much that I would like you to meet me.

My dear, your hair is so sleek and gleaming that I would just like to touch it. Your eyes are so soft that I would just like to stare into them forever. My dear, you

are so adorable that I cannot tell you enough that you must, you simply must, come to my doorstep tomorrow evening and meet me. I live in a cottage just outside of Los Angeles. The address is enclosed. I am in love with you. Bring only yourself, and I will show you what true love is.

Love,

Gary"

Georgianna, reading this, was so happy! She had never in all her life been spoken to in such a romantic way. At once she rose up from her seat, clapped her hands together, and jumped up and down.

What was she going to wear? What makeup was she going to put on? Was it going to be the green dress or the red one? How should she wear her hair?

The next night, Georgianna got all ready. She decided to wear her silk, eggshell gown. She decided to wear her hair in a dramatic bun, with dangly, diamond earrings, and dot on a very expensive perfume.

So, the big moment came. She drove out of Los Angeles to the address where he said he had a cottage. She parked

at the end of a long driveway and got out. She was so nervous. She felt a little sweat above her lip. But she was determined to meet her admirer.

She knocked only three times, and the door opened.
"Come into my parlor, young miss."

She answered back immediately with a wink and her commercial trademark, "Sure, anything you want."
