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One day as I was filling in the blanks on a check I intended to send to an animal shelter that needed money in a bad way because they had ended up with several horses that had been shamefully neglected, a visiting in-law says, "What a waste of money. Most horses are mooches. They don't do nothin' for their keep."

I placed the pen down out of reach which is my habit if I have a sharp object in my hand, and suddenly through no fault of my own, I become fearful that I might shove it into a person's eye or throat.

I slowly turned the high back leather chair around until I could look deep into my brother-in-law's eyes. I asked nonchalantly, "Have any luck job hunting today, Dan?"

I almost never ask an idiot a question that I don't already know the answer. I knew he hadn't had any luck because he hadn't been out of the house since arriving three days early.

Dan with his best woe-is-me expression said, "No, there ain't no work to be had."

A lot of people cringe when they hear a double negative, but Dan has a way of rotating his head when he's getting ready to lie that reminds you of an owl. He ends up looking up at people shorter than he is. I can't explain it, but it just seems to make listening to Dan worthwhile.

"Dan, has my sister Wanda ever mentioned her great, great grandfather, who because of similar circumstances just happens to be my great, great grandfather as well?" I supplied my sister's name hoping my brother-in-law, who'd make Jethro Bodine from The Beverly Hillbillies look like a Rhodes Scholar, wouldn't ask, "Who?"

Owl man didn't answer because he had sat down in an overstuffed chair I use when reading or watching a video, and he was busy feeling under the cushion for change. I have on a couple of occasions put a few coins under the cushion just to watch him fish them out while trying to look as if he was just fidgeting around trying to get comfortable.

I continued on, "The truth is, Dan, you'd not be in that chair if it were not for a horse." I now had his attention such as it was.

"You see, Dan, Wanda's great, great grandfather was caught out in a blizzard. After several hours in knee deep snow hoping against all hope that his old horse could make it back to the house, he passed out. When he awoke he was home in his own bed. His family told him the next day that his horse had brought him to the front door and whinnied, screamed, and nickered until they open the door. Then it fell over dead."

I watched as Dan made his way to his feet. Once upright and with the \$0.45 cents I had stowed under the cushion he says, "Can't see what that's got to do with me being in that old chair?"

When I see a horse lazily grazing I see a creature whose ancestors lost their lives saving the lives of my ancestors. I realize that if it had not been for the horse that I might not be here.

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