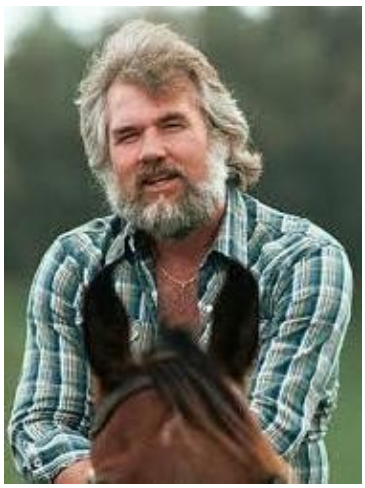
The Coward of his County

By : Spyguy

Ken, the son of Clark Kent & Aunt Donnita... wonders why he is the center of attention in the Jr. High School that he's attending... A terrible day at school creates monsters that threaten to tear him apart.



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The earliest memories of my life are ones of running for my life, & talking with the speed of lightning, with all of the needful ease/grace of one of those "Silver-toungued-demons". A salesman has nothing on me... I had to develop the gift of gab; I'd have been killed before I had ever left the Ebison Elementary School where I learned to run like a linebacker, & dodge like a slick little "Ricky-ticky-tavie" going after it's viper out of thin air.

That was an earlier time... Now, it's my Eighth grade year. I'm going to graduate this afternoon... If I'm not taken out of this world by the big High School kid that I see tracking me & making a bee-line in my direction with a look on his face that says; "I'm going to get you alone, & there is not any single thing that you'll be able to do about it." Hands, sweating, forehead flushed & damp; heart thumping a mile a minute,stimulating panic, there in my chest,an over-zealous, cat-gut bass-drum, pounding out it's rhythm like a half-time show in the Bronx... Clammy skin, knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that extinction is eminent, I scan the escape routes availible to my fleet-footed legs. I know this guy, he, himself, never actually hit me before. He was there though, he witnessed, he watched, he knew, he was one of the predators... The other members of his gang had to be around there somewhere, didn't they? Where were they? These guys are never alone... Is this a trap? Why does it always have to be me? How come there are never enough adults around? How did I get caught again?

"Hi Lex-Tony-W-what's going on?-I-I've been staying out of your way-I-I-promise-Sorry I didn't move fast enough for you-Are you wanting homework done for you?-I'm quick with it-I-I can have it done right away...I-I'll get you anything you need..." I say, while backing away towards the staircase behind me. (If I can make it to the staircase I'll be safe, unless he's got guys stationed at the top...)

He sees what is coming & holds out his hand, fingers spread, palm down, shushing me as he slows & stops moving towards me...(No, wait, this has got to be a trick, he's probably stalling 'til they get in place upstairs), "Ken, you don't understand, I just want to talk with you... Relax for just a minute will you? I promise, I'm not going to hurt you, besides, you know that you can run a lot faster than me", he said. (That much is true, I can't count on him being alone though.) "You can always run away in a minute if you still feel threatened", he said, then he took a little step backward, almost as though he knew I could now escape around him the other way if I got a quick start.

"Ok, you've got my attention...", I say turning my head & looking both ways quickly... (I don't understand, what's his gimmick?), "Can I just talk to you for a minute?" He said, with a sort-of pained look on his face. (What's going on? I don't get it.) "...Sure Tony, anything for you,...I'm willing to accomplish anything you need from me, no matter how long it takes." (Man, what did I just say? Now I'm really in for it, how stupid...) "...Ken, I have been watching the way people have been picking on you & taking advantage of you for many years, & I want to say that I'm frankly embarrassed that I didn't have the guts to stand up for you & take a stand against something which I knew was wrong, & yet, that I let happen anyway. But, I've found out something...", he said, with a sinserity I'd never before seen in his eyes.

"It's important...you need to understand this..." Searching my eyes for understanding, he said;"This will make all the difference in the world for your future". At that moment the world could have ended & I wouldn't have even known; all my mental energy was completely attuned to my would-be-attacker turned... What? Friend? Tormenter? Good-Samaritan? (I don't understand.) My brain, at the same time unable, incapable, & totally inept to understand, and incredulous was stuck...Searching everywhere for an answer. "Wh-What are you s-saying T-Tony?" I stammered, unable to respond in a coherant manner. Hurrying on, he continued; "There are two kinds of people in the world Ken... The Tigers & the Pussycats...You, all of your life, have been a

pussycat... You are prey for all of the Tigers of the world, worse, you're the worst kind of pussycat, you're prey even for all the other pussycats. Do you want to change your life & your future?"

(I don't know what to say...I don't even know what to think)

I nodded yes...dumbly as though I were in a trance...(He's still talking, & I'm missing it... I finally realized, as I forced myself to pay more attention to his steady stream of helpfull words), "...I have seen this from my own experiance, your world can literally change..." As he stopped for a breath, I tentatively asked him; "Could you please explain to me again about the Tiger's & the cats?" "Well", he said, "I wasn't done yet, but yes, you see it's like this; The Tigers are always looking for their territory, for conquest, for pussycats to eat up for lunch, & anything else that attracts thier attention. When two tigers meet, they look each other up & down, they analyze who is the srtonger tiger, & they fight... or else one tiger runs away to find a pussycat to attack. Since you have been a pussycat all of your life, & since you are the type of a pussycat that attracts attention, YOU get to be their lunch. Now, the same thing happens when two pussycats meet... YOU get to be that ones lunch too. Can you understand what I'm trying to tell you?", he said.Then, easing forward just a little & reaching out to take my arm gently, he pulled me over to a chair nearby, & told me to sit down. I was like putty, a seagull...waiting, hanging on every crumb falling from the mouth of this, my emancipator... "You end up being everyone's lunch". He said it again for emphasis. "EVERYONE'S LUNCH..."

"Now, don't you want to do something about it? Don't you want it to change?" He asked, with something akin to hope in his eyes,(Oh, I do, I do, I really, really do), I thought as I nodded my head vigorously up & down. "Well", he said; "You're going to have to be willing to change your mentality, & that won't be easy..." He commented, showing a true sinserity & sensitivity that I wouldn't have thought possible. "You will be going to High School next year, & there is going to be a new opportunity for you to remake yourself. Everyone will be new there, no one will know you, even if a few of them do, you're going to have all summer to work on this, & you will be able to be a totally new you..." I must have had an incredulous look on my face, because he said; "You have to begin to walk like a Tiger, but when you talk, & this is VERY IMPORTANT, you have to talk like a pussycat... That way, no one will know who you are". He continued, "If you walk like a tiger, & talk like a tiger, you'll always be fighting because tigers always want to be the biggest, baddest, tiger... Same thing happens if you walk like a pussycat & talk like a pussycat... Fights, & somebody's lunch..." He paused for effect; "Now, if you walk like a pussycat & talk like a tiger, once again, someone eat's you for lunch... Fights... BUT...", And at that he looked me deep in the eyes. "...If, & this is the MOST important thing, IF you can learn to walk like a tiger, but talk like a pussycat... Then, no one will mess with you." He paused to make sure that I was fully attentive. "...The tigers won't mess with you because you look like one of them, but you are not challenging for the top spot... The pussycats won't mess with you since they will think you are a tiger... & you will have redefined yourself as a human being in your own world..."

As he finished telling me this, he said; "Sorry I didn't know this before Kent, but I wanted to come back & tell you this... I hope that it'll make a major difference to your future." With those words, he once again looked me in the eye, wished me success, & then he turned around & walked away. I never saw that young man again, but, though he never knew it, he changed my life that day, & became my personal hero... That day would change my life. It would make a big huge difference to me, redefine my character, restore hope to my soul, & set me on the path to personal liberty in a way that no-one has before or since... Lex Luthor... Tony as we called him, had remade me as a man, & the world would never again see the me before the me. This was two generations before the man who became later what the world would know as Superman... Would he ever have even come to be if not for my own hero, my "Superman"? I guess I'll never know...

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