

Soul Ryder

A Journey into the Merging of Souls

soul

NOUN

- The spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal.

Ryder

Origin of Ryder

- Dutch *rijder*, properly, a rider.

The Beginning

Roka barrels to the front door rearing up on her hind legs, her front paws air swimming. Laughing I say, "Okay, okay, girl, I'm coming." Her wise amber eyes gaze at me as if to say, "C'mon, Mom! The world is waiting for us!"

I grab some doggy disposal bags and we head to the park adjacent to my house. Roka trots ahead, her snout to the ground. I admire her reddish-blond coat, and curled tail which hints at Husky genes. Her black-speckled tongue with ink-like stains tells of some Chow heritage too. She was a pound puppy so I will never know but I recognized her majestic spirit immediately. I carry her leash looped around my hand and let her run freely spreading the joy that only animals can. As we walk, I rehearse for my group mediumship at a spiritual center where I will communicate with attendee loved ones who have passed. Clairvoyant, or psychic, readings are how I make my living. I know, I know, I've heard all possible judgments. It's just the way I am. I was born this way, it's normal for me.

The spiritual center where the group mediumship will be held is a good opportunity to help people and build my client base. It's not easy to make a living doing this because the income is not steady but I know it's what I'm meant to do. I've been spending more time finding places and people that support a life of meditation, healing, and using your intuition.

I look down at Roka, "Okay, how does this sound? Thank you for coming. I'm Addie Ryder, a natural clairvoyant-medium. By that, I mean that I was born this way.... No, no. That's not good.

Thank you for coming, I'm Addie Ryder, and tonight we will connect with your loved one on the other side... Ugh," I groan. "That's not right either. Maybe I can just say, Hi. I'm Addie Ryder. Let's get started."

Ryder is my given name which I've kept because that is how people associate me, "Addie Ryder, the psychic." I look at Roka just as she bolts into a wooded area of the park.

"What is it, girl? What's in there?" I clap my hands together three times alerting her to come back.

It's unusual for her not to respond immediately, so I walk in the direction she went. Goose flesh races across my skin and the air thickens.

C'mon, shake it off, its broad daylight, there is nothing there.

The thick shade cools my skin instantly and I wrap my arms around myself in a warm hug.

"Roka, where are you, girl?" In a musical cadence, we tend to use with animals and babies, I hear a girl talking to Roka.

My dog is sitting obediently in front of a young girl who strokes her lush coat and I am sucker punched with old memories. The girl whose age I guess to be about thirteen is a stark reminder of things lost. Her light brown hair falls braided over one shoulder and she is slight. Her eyes are a light brown, with slightly hooded lids that are framed with tawny-colored, skin that looks pore-less.

She says, "You're so pretty and soft. You look like a snow dog. I wish you were mine but I can't have a dog, no I can't. My mom is allergic. Besides, it's weird at my house right now. I wouldn't

wish that on anyone. But we could be friends because everyone needs friends. Yes, we do. Huh sweet girl, or are you a boy?" She snuggles against Roka's furry neck and kisses her snout without fear of a strange dog.

Roka's excited tail wag swishes through dry leaves and dirt. I walk gently toward them talking to the dog, "I see why you didn't come when I clapped, you found a friend. Shall I introduce us?"

I look directly into the eyes of this stranger. I am immediately doused in a wild and raw emotion. I am surprised I can speak with the restriction of my throat.

"This is Roka and I'm Addie. We live just across the street. What's your name?"

Smiling, she stands brushing the knees of her jeans, "Oh hi. I'm Leah."

"Leah. What a pretty name. I know we just met, but would you like to walk back into the grassy area with us? We are safe, I promise. I don't want Roka to get a tick back here in the woods. We can sit on the bench near the other families."

"Sure. I think that would be okay."

As we walk, we hear the screeching chains of children on swings, and mothers calling out to their broods.

I ask, "Do you live around here?"

She smiles pointing away noncommittedly. "We live that way."

"I don't think I've seen you here before. It's such a secluded park. Do you come here much?"

"Yeah, sometimes with Connor, my brother. We're twins."

Her words screech like a bow sliding across an untuned fiddle but I'm practiced at hiding my pain. She is chatty and keeps talking.

"He comes here more than I do with his friends to play ball and stuff." Her brows knit as she widens her eyes, an index finger on her chin, tilting her head, face scrunched in a simpleton mock, and in a silly voice says, "At least... I think it's this park."

Spontaneous laughter bursts from my belly instantly healing my broken heart and I lean into her as though we are old friends, "Oh, you're clever. I like you."

As she talks, my stomach stays tight because I can't shake the painful familiarity I feel. Leah exudes a sweet, innocence, and melancholy that comes and goes like vapor and it hollows me out because I know how loneliness feels. She is lost, and I have a desperate urge to help her.

Giggling, and snapping her fingers in front of Roka's snout, they trot toward the bench ahead of me and my eyes swell with tears because Leah has been traumatized and she doesn't know that she is dead.