

Pokey Haunt Us

One Halloween afternoon, I went to the grocery store for a few essentials when a woman, about half my age, caught my eye. She was Asian, dressed as an Indian maiden, perhaps Princess Summerfallwinterspring or Pocahontas, and she seemed to be moving unusually slowly and staring at me.

My rapid mind, too used to making connections from its morass of cultural associations, tried to put the pieces together. It was unlikely that she'd dress as the aforementioned character from *Howdy Doody*, the 1950s' kids' show—few people would recognize it. It was more likely that she used the even older image of Pocahontas from around the 1600s in Jamestown, VA. But why was she staring at me? I was unlikely to have spurred a romantic interest since the age difference was substantial. Perhaps she recognized me from some online photo or maybe I reminded her of someone she knew. And why was she moving so slowly? Could it have been a neurological disorder, or an injury from a Tae Kwon Do class?

I approached. “Do you need any help?”

She shook her head and nodded toward the adjacent café. I walked her there, a matter of perhaps 20 steps, moving as slowly as she needed, and sat her down. She nodded again, indicating that I might join her.

Okay, now this was getting weird: she was silent, as if she did not speak English, slow, as if injured, and staring, as if she knew me. All this and dressed like Pocahontas.

It was Halloween, after all, so perhaps this was just an extended trick while she had been shopping for treats. Thinking myself clever, I sat down at her table, smiled, and said, “Boo!”

Her only response was, “Dough,” then a semi-clarifying, “Bu-do.” She was very pretty and her Asian face seemed to fit well in Native American garb.

“Oh, did you recognize me from a video or article?”

She smiled but said nothing.

I had to have been dreaming this! It was one of those semi-awake, early morning fantasies that seem as if it happened yesterday, but was entirely a figment of that formerly rapid mind, slowed by AM drowsiness.

Now a new mystery arose: why was I semi-dreaming this? It was indeed Halloween, which fact could account for my conjuring a Pocahontas costume, but why did I put that together with a lovely Asian lass, a possible martial arts injury, and a slow slog to a grocery store café? Okay, the lovely Asian lass could have been because of my inclination toward some sort of obscure practice they call the martial arts. But helping an incapacitated martial artist poking toward a café? I'd have to put on my psychologist-*qua*-dream-analyst cap for this one.

Since the chances are high you are a martial artist if you are reading this, let me invite you to participate in my dream analysis. Why does Pokey haunt us? Put yourself in my moccasins.

What if you were a long-time practitioner, seduced by the ways of the Asian martial arts, mature enough to be well-experienced, young enough to be active, but edging past a retirement that quietly asks you to take a load off?

Oh, did I give it away?