



The GRAVEYARD HOUR

A touching story about the hard facts in wildlife protection!

In wildlife rescue and rehab, we call it the GRAVEYARD HOUR.

It is the time we all dread. The darkest hours before dawn. One is cold, alone, filled with despair and a shattering heart. It is the time when the heart slows to nothing, the body temperature plummets and the breath becomes shallow.

Still, a little eye is searching for some comfort. A tear will run down the cheek of that little soul. She will look you directly in the eye. She will blink. It is the time to die.

In the early hours of a recent morning, we lost a young and innocent calf, whom we had rescued barely five days ago. We have battled tirelessly for these past days to try and restore some balance and health to this calf. She was less than a month old. She has not had her time in this realm. It was stolen from her by a series of astonishingly poor decisions and selfish actions. By the time she reached our care, this calf was so badly compromised and we knew we had a gargantuan task on our hands. It was not to be and we, as humans one and all, failed her.

However we, at ZEN, choose to be the ones who will gently lay their hands on a dying animal, negating our own feelings of hopelessness and grief. We ensure that the animal passes on peacefully and in a place of love. This is priceless.

Only once it is all over, is one allowed the privilege of personal grief, anger and pain.

I wonder how many times ones' heart has to shatter before it is all too much?
I wonder how much courage one has in reserve to continue fighting these relentless battles for breath.

At this point, I really don't know.

If you intend to rescue an elephant calf, do make sure you are educated and informed about the protocols necessary for its survival. Elephant calves are unique and incredibly difficult to save, most especially the little ones.

There is no place for ego and self grandeur in elephant nursing and rehabilitation. It is a brutal endeavour that takes more courage and resilience than can ever be described.

I will not go into the details of this rescue. I ask you to respect that and take some understanding and compassion with you from this particular story.

Breathe now your soul, little SABI.

Written by Roxy Danckwerts at January 2020 (Wild is Life/ZEN)

(Photograph of Sabi was taken one day after her rescue.)

