

Winter Memory
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The cursor on my screen flashes with a steady flicker, imitating the exasperating tick of the nearby wall clock. Sparing a glance, I turn my head in an attempt to make sense of those human invented lines. Seven o'clock. Two hours until I have to stand in front of a room crammed with relatives and friends while I choke on my tears trying to speak. Two hours left and I'm sitting here in a hired suit, staring at a blank screen. My sleep deprived eyes wander from the time and become fixed on the dew covered lawn shimmering like a calm river outside my icy lounge-room window. A bone chilling breeze sneaking through the ajar window hit me like a face full of cold water and blew me into a memory of my last winter adventure with him.

"Sonny boy? C'mon buddy wake up, it's our favourite time of the year again!"

I let out a groan, partly to let him know I was awake, but mostly so he would stop tapping me on the face with his stony, blistered hand. Squinting at my bedside alarm I noticed that it was five o'clock.

"Look at the bloody time!" I half-jokingly grunted at him. "I've still got another two hours sleep before we need to go. Ya trying to kill me for Christ sake?" I rolled over and buried my face in my pillow.

"Not if you want to beat them damn Henderson brothers to the good spots! Because if you do, I'd say you have about half an hour before we need to be in that ute, leaving this house!"

He'd got me.

He smirked and finally limped out, leaving the stench of his work clothes behind.

As annoying as he was, he was right. We looked forward to this event all year long. It was the only time we got to spend some quality time together.

I steadily arose from the comforting embrace of my bed, rubbed the crust from my eyes and searched for my balance. After a hasty morning routine, we were soon bouncing down the

dirt road towards the Winter Fishing Classic. The tractor induced pot holes questioned the rusty Holden Ute and makeshift boat trailer. This year we were really gunning for first prize and we had a promising chance since we had found some killer fishing spots. The Henderson boys had won it the last five winters in a row and it was time for a new pair of champions. Twenty brain-rattling minutes later we came to a steadfast halt at the entrance gate.

“Great weather for it this year, aye Sport? The old organiser laughed at his own idea of humour as he leant against the driver side door. “That’ll be thirty bucks there, mate.

“I shockingly stared at him. “Bloody hell! It was fifteen last year! you must think we’re all rich around here or something, ya old timer.” I bantered with him as he shoved his head through the window with one of those stingy straw hats on that looked like its seen the heads of twenty different people.

“Well we gotta pay for that fancy first prize over there somehow.” he gloated as he pointed at the top-of-the-line fishing boat that was proudly displayed on a sturdy, factory made trailer.

“We’ll be leaving with that this time, mate” I confidently stated as I handed him the entrance fee, snatched our 2013 participant sticker and continued to the empty boat ramp.

Fifteen minutes and a couple homemade sandwiches later, we were in our tinny, skipping across the water towards our secluded fishing spot. Soon, we were eagerly tying off under a large River Red gum tree and casting our lines towards the water-logged branches protruding from the surface of the calm Murrumbidgee.

An Antarctic-like hour had passed and both of us were shivering, finding anyway to warm up. To make it worse neither of us had even seen the hint of a fish. He roughly nudged me and with a mile wide grin began to vouch for his spot. “Don’t worry, I’ve fished here before and it’s the best on the river for the next hundred kays either way. Give her another hour, Sonny Boy. There’s a winner swimming down there for sure, just gotta be patien...” his reassuring speech was interrupted by a thunderous crack. My eyes shot up quickly enough to watch in fear as a towering branch plummeted from the century-old tree, hammering into our tin foil boat where he was sitting and hurled me into water that stole my breath.

Another numbing breeze rushed through my window, snatching me out of my horrific memory and slamming back into my present nightmare. I spared another glance from the screen and look at the time. Five minutes have passed. I stare back at my computer screen and squint at it through tear-filled eyes. Rubbing my frozen fingers in a desperate attempt to get some warmth into them, I begin to write the first words of many that I wish I didn't have to read so early in my life.

"Dad's Eulogy..."