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In The Fall

by Cody Metcalfe

In the fall the leaves fall swiftly, yet in the winter they stiffly freeze. She had left him in the spring and by the fall she was accompanying someone new, and someone much different than he was. And he thought to himself how she might have chosen the difference on purpose.

Though he caught himself time-to-time deviating his path from her lingering mental presence, he knew lots of reasons why this could have happened; besides, it happens all the time. Now that everyone was back from the war and they all had their stories, scars, and glory, he realized desperately that he had nothing; not even the diamonds he bought for her before she left him. Cruelty, he thought, plain and guileless cruelty.

Once, early in September, he was on his normal route to work at the corner store, and there they were both sitting in the warmth of a huge loud truck, talking and laughing with excitement about something oblivious to reality. He thought as the light changed from a rough red to a gentle green, Obviously I am jealous of the oblivious. Yes I am lonesome and neglecting how beautiful the oblivious really is, he said to himself, while finding the handle on the front door of his corner store.

Time sped by like the clouds in a sky that are fading into darkness. Ben said, "Wilson, you got to close up tonight. I've got myself a hot blonde date. And don't forget to turn the freezer off in the back, ya hear?"

Wilson responded, "I got it Ben, have a good time and kiss her once for me!" He began to smile at the tall and skinny younger friend who left in a hurry. And a memory stung him sharp and clean. The freezer had been their place; he had taken her there all the time, and he wondered if she even remembered things like that anymore.

The store was cool and he had closed many times late-- actually he

liked closing late; being alone was kind of a refreshing gift of peace from the drifting world he was losing touch with.

People would shuffle in and out buying mostly homely things such as canned foods, beer, or cigarettes. With about thirty minutes until closing time, an old couple came in and took their sweet time, he thought, so he decided to pressure them out with the cold. He turned up the freezer as low as it could go and sat back behind the high risen desk. The cash register served its purpose as an obstacle that shielded him as he watched the older couple communicate with ease and pleasure. Finally, they picked out a can of chicken noodle soup and approached the counter where he had been posing as a hermit.

"This will be it?" he asked with frustration.

"Actually I will also take this for the lady," the old man said, as he grabbed an Indian decorated bracelet, and then grabbed his spouse's hand and squeezed it tight.

"Ok! That will be six dollars and fifty cents sir," Wilson said.

"She's sick, very bad cold, these autumn illnesses are just brutal," the old man answered. Wilson took a glance at the woman's blue eyes sensing her bittersweet pain.

She spoke plausibly with a light tone, "It's so cold in here, and they make you keep it that way don't they?" His frustration had been melted away by her words and he whispered firmly, "No, I keep it this cold so I can stay awake, I am sorry for the temperature!"

"Sorry? I am sorry for you son, this temperature could wake the dead!" The old couple said no more and scurried out the door. He took a deep breath and began to close up for the night when the phone rang long and hard with much enthusiasm.

"Hello, yes I'll be right there." He roamed back and forth through the empty isles and cleaned the floor half-ass, then took the large bills from the register and hid them. He turned out the lights and locked

the front door.

He drove to the site where he was due to pick up his little sister from her fashionable high school dance. Was it prom? he wondered. "I remember my prom with, oh, there she was again, somehow she always fights into my thoughts and they always let her through." As he pulled up to the brand new high school and spotted his sister, it hit him. The freezer was still on and the door is opened-- Jesus, I am going to be fired, for sure I am going to be fired. He cracked the window and yelled, "Steph, get in the car, come on, get in!"

"I'm coming, here let me in." He let her in and before she could shut the door, he drove. The lights were working in his favor as he galloped the sedan down Main Street, the biggest one in the small town.

"Where are you going, Wilson? I need to go home."

"We got to make a stop real fast, just sit tight," he said, and pressed his shoe down further on the gas.

"No, I really need to be dropped off because Marshal Reilly is picking me up later, and home is right up here, please just drop me off!" She smiled, and gave him a good act of pleading.

"Alright, fine, but what are you doing with the Reilly boy? He is almost as old as me?"

"Don't worry about it Will, I really love him, and truly we are in love," she replied.

"Love, don't you even say the word. You're way too young for that word, and truly you wouldn't even know if." She broke in with a brave stare and began to scream.

"How dare you say I can't have and feel love, how dare you! Age is just a number and a time frame in which I can choose to spend with anyone I want, and if I fall in love, then I fall in love. It is you who

doesn't know what love is, it is you who has to worry because you thought you had it with that slut up on Magnolia, but you didn't, nope, you just were used."

"Get out of the car, here, there's our house, get out, get out now," Wilson ordered. She slammed the door in his face and ran up the sidewalk that split the yard in half and went inside.

He was, by this time, starting to cry to himself silently with soft, yet deep sobs. He continued on his way back to the store, only to think why that event with his little sister had just happened. He had felt hard things before, but never such anger from his own sister. He was not a very angry person and had not really been exposed to the force or power of it. While driving the lights gave way to his speeding automobile.

When he reached the corner store all was the way he had left it about an hour before. The lights were off and the gas pump wasn't running. He parked and started his path around to the back. The only sound heard was a light on the top of the back porch, and the croaking of what seemed to be a sick bloated bullfrog that had eaten too many bugs to have an attractive mating call.

He neared the freezer he noticed a large truck parked all the way around back. Yes, it was the same truck of her new companion. It was them, he thought, but no one was in it. The same big truck that he saw them in previously that day, but where were they? He journeyed closer to the freezer, walking quietly with fear building up inside him. Was this the same fear all his friends felt out on the front lines over seas? He didn't know, and in fact, he began to feel silly for this fear and gained momentum to the door. The door was wide open and the cold air was dumping itself out into the warmer night air, you could see it in the light just billowing like a small cloud.

As he looked in he saw them barely through a beam from the porch light. They were moving; they were having conversations but not with their voices, with their bodies. His heart dropped, and he froze. The cold air, he couldn't even feel. He looked closer and it hit him

right then and there. It was the anger, the rage that he thought he didn't have. Instantly he grabbed the heavy door, slung it closed, pulled the metal slab over the handle, and locked it from the outside.

Now he was sweating and choking on something in the back of his throat. He took a deep breath, breathed way in, and let it out slowly. He didn't look through the small window to see their reaction; anyway, he wouldn't have been able to see their faces.

About The Author

Cody Metcalfe is from Fort Worth, Texas. This coming fall he will attend the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

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