

"It's yours," Pa said with a raspy tone, as he sank into the couch with a groan. The couch was a faded yellow and looked as though it had been there since the 70's.

"None of your cousins want it." Pa said, "And I sure as hell can't drive it anymore," he added with a laugh which exposed his few remaining teeth.

I was a little taken aback at first, I didn't expect him to just give it to me. I turned to my Dad who was sitting across the room. He gave me an approving nod. I smiled as I realised that I was actually going to get this car. Of course I didn't know how to drive a manual, or an automatic for that matter. But Dad said he'd teach me, and I couldn't wait.

"Now Stephen, I've got something for you" Pa said as he began to search the cabinet next to him.

Pa was wearing an old red hoodie that he had worn around the house for the past few years. It was dirty and bits of fabric were sticking out from cat claws. Chewy was a lap cat, and consequently, he had a habit of destroying clothes. But Chewy had passed away just last year, leaving Pa alone on the farm. My cousin had offered to get him a new kitten, but he refused. He didn't want to live with something that was gonna outlive him. I didn't really get it, I wouldn't want to live alone.

After finally finding what he was looking for, Pa pulled out an envelope out of the cabinet and extended it out to my Dad.

Pa cleared his throat before speaking, "This is for the drive up".

Dad sighed, "I'm not gonna take that Dad, we don't need it"

"Just take it Stephen" Pa responded.

The two continued to squabble for a few seconds before Pa raised his voice.

"You will take it Stephen and that is the end of it"

There was a short moment of silence before Dad reached out and took the envelope. Sighing and rolling his eyes as he did so, as if he was the one giving up money.

My Dad took a long breath before asking, "Are you ready to go Dad?".

"Just gimme a sec" Pa said before he pushed himself out of the couch, groaning as he did so. He walked into the next room and we waited. Dad dragged his hand over his face and then placed the envelope on the chair beside him.

As we sat and waited in the silent room, the only sound was a clock ticking. Light seeped in through the dusty blinds and swirled in the air. Like the rest of the house, the ceiling was decorated with abandoned cobwebs which gathered dust and descended so far down that they could hit you in the face. A bookshelf stood in the corner of the room, full to the brink with tethering books on the Cold War and modern politics. Just like many objects in the house, touching these books would leave your fingertips grey. Above the old fireplace stood framed pictures of the younger versions of my Dad and his siblings. My Dad looked thin and stylish, but even in his youth I could almost see his grey hair. But still, it was reassuring to know that he once looked good.

This room was one of the better looking ones in the house. The kitchen and the bathroom were radioactive, only to be entered under the most extreme circumstances. The house had been decaying like a dying tree over the past few years, first losing all its good looks and now losing its supports. And yet it was still standing.

Pa stumbled in from the next room, wearing a mustard shirt and brown pants.

“C’mon let’s go,” he said.

He led us through the kitchen and out the back door. Dad and I followed him cautiously through the overgrown garden and to Dad’s car. I’m told that the garden was once a highly kept paradise of grass paths and finely trimmed hedges. Nowadays it was just a snake hazard.

Pa struggled to open and close the car door, and refused any help from my Dad. He always sat in the back, even on the longer drives to Bendigo, he would always insist on sitting on the back seat. I’ve never bothered to ask him about it though, I’m sure he has his reasons.

Before getting in the car myself, I thought I would quickly check out my new car in the garage. It wasn’t “new” new, just new to me. The car was covered with old linen sheets and dirty beach towels. This was Pa’s attempt to preserve it I suppose. I pulled off the sheets to reveal the corroding navy blue paint. The tires were flat, the windows had scratches, and one of the side mirrors had been taped over. I stood still for a moment, in complete awe. As I grazed my fingers over the hood, I imagined where this car would take me. I imagined taking the A1 around Australia. I’d start with the East coast. From Melbourne to Moe, to Marlo, to Malacoota, all the way up to Moruya. I’d fly past the Blue Mountains before reaching Port Macquarie, where I’d go from surf point to surf point, collecting sand in the seats as I did so. As I stood in the dark garage, with the distinct damp smell of old sheets filling my lungs, I could almost feel the harsh wind on my face, drowning out every other sound as I drove north along against the great pacific.

Suddenly, my Dad brought me back into reality.

“C’mon Fin, Let’s go.” Dad called out.

I threw the linen sheets and beach towels back over the car and ran back out of the garage. I hopped in the front passenger seat of Dad's car and we began the drive into town. This trip was routine for Dad and I each time we visited Pa. The first stop in town was Aldi, the favourite amongst all of us in the car.

Pa made his way through the aisles as I followed with a trolley. He walked with the rigour of a young man, an unrelenting force. But even so, he had a sway and a stumble to his stride, he feet unsteady from a lifetime of walking.

He threw into the trolley only the bare essentials. Off-brand Arnotts biscuits, tim-tams, blocks of chocolate(which I was sure he couldn't bite into), and most importantly, 2 minute soup packets. They were pretty much all he had lived on since Gran passed. I was sure they were the secret to his long life.

I followed him to the milk aisle. He lifted a single carton of long life milk into the trolley, the same kind that Dad has at home.

When Dad saw this, he asked
"Do you want us to get you a box Dad?".

"No no it's alright" Pa dismissed.

"I can get you a box," I added.

"Oh alright then" Pa said, annoyed that someone was helping him.

"Do you want us to get you two?" Dad asked.

"No no, I won't live that long," Pa said before moving on to the next aisle.

Dad and I looked at each other and laughed, amused by the casual tone of his remark. Pa however didn't bother to look back, he just kept moving.

Afterwards we dropped Pa back at the farm, said our goodbyes and began the journey back to Melbourne. On the way back, Dad joked,

"You know that's what you're gonna have to deal with when I get old?"

I smiled and laughed, amused by the thought of Dad turning out like Pa.

"Stubborn and stupid" Dad added as stared at the road ahead, his face no longer appearing amused.

I smiled and looked out the window. We sped past endless green paddocks with all sorts of animals. I saw a few horses standing completely still, watching me as we drove by. Jeez I thought to myself, I hope I don't turn out like that.