

Tell Me it was Just a Dream

by Anthony Wray

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Once again as usual, Ben's father had not returned home, as he sat in his office drunken, consumed by greed.

"Dad, we really need to talk about the family business," Ben cautiously entered the room. The stench of whiskey oozing from his father's body grew stronger as he approached him. His father was bent over, meticulously writing what seemed to be a letter.

"I'm serious Dad!" Ben's large, stern, muscular figure for a fifteen year old approached his desk swiftly, eyeing the gold plated nametag, Mr. B. Hudson. Ben's, coarse, blister scarred hands clenched repeatedly. Feelings of every time his father ignored him in the past finally pushed the brim to overflow.

Still, Mr. Hudson poured another drink of whiskey in his crystal glass. The succulent nectar of grandpa's cough medicine was so smooth and warm that as the triple shot slid down his throat in a massive gulp, he was ready to pour another.

"Will you listen to me?" Ben tore the bottle from his hand spilling only drops from the nearly empty bottle.

"What is the matter with you boy?"

"I'm not a boy anymore, father. I'm fifteen tomorrow and by state law I can work for pay."

"Oh, so that makes you a man now, does it?" Mr. Hudson stood to reach for another bottle from the cabinet behind him. "Get your hands greased up building Detroit muscle? You still have a long way to go."

"I have been building those engines since I was five, learning all that I can from your employees who stay regardless of their wages."

“They’re loyal! You can’t put a price on loyalty,” Mr. Hudson said as he opened the bottle.

“Loyal?” Ben waited for a response. “You still don’t get it do you? Our family has been in this business for over sixty years. Your grandfather bought this warehouse to open shop.” As he noticed his father was about to pour another, Ben placed his hand over the glass.

“Ben, you move your hand right now!”

Ben walked towards the window to outlook the shop floor, the weighted crystal glass in his hand. “Remember when Jimmy saved me from the sheet metal compressor? Well now his family has to stay with the Martins because their home was repossessed. All thanks to your greed for all these inanimate objects in your office. Not to mention your uncontrollable thirst for imported whiskey.”

Mr. Hudson was furious his son mentioned his greed, and his alcoholism took hold, “Shut up!” Saliva spat from his mouth.

“Is that all you fucking care about is your whiskey.”

“Give me that damn glass!”

“Here,” Ben hurled the glass at his father which broke a bottle in the cabinet behind him.

Mr. Hudson became enraged as he looked at the bottle that now spewed liquids. He glanced towards his son only to turn in towards a punch that knocked him back against the cabinet, breaking more bottles. “Ugh,” Ben’s father said taking a moment to absorb the punch. “Woo. Nice punch kid.”

Ben breathed deep as he straightened himself from the throw, “Now you listen to me, father. I have damn good reason to justify my actions.”

Mr. Hudson looked at Ben, his eyes filled with hatred, “You know if you are willing to dish it out, you better be ready to take it. Now put those hands up boy.” His father swayed from the booze, “I taught you better than that. You want to be a man? Come on, be a man!”

Ben threw a jab to the face followed by a haymaker, but Mr. Hudson countered and pitched a quick throw to the gut leaving Ben winded, doubled over as his hands clenched the shattered glass from the whiskey bottles. “If you are going to throw the finishing blow don’t cock your shoulder out,” Mr. Hudson said as he went to lay the finishing blow this time, but Ben, cracked him in the ribs causing damage.

They both fell to the ground, looking at each other, gasping for breath.

“Nice hit kid.”

“Dad, you really to stop drinking.”

“Yeah, I know,” Mr. Hudson glanced at the cabinet behind him and saw only one bottle still intact. He barely reached up for the bottle, but grunted in pain as he grabbed it, then extended his arm out to his son, “Here, take it. Get rid of it. Don’t make the same mistakes I did.”

Ben was shocked as his father stood up and left the office. His vision blurred as the scent of whiskey departed.

Whistles and grinding gears jolted Ben to his senses as the factory started to come alive. His father was gone, so Ben quickly raced downstairs to the production floor where his father had everyone gathered around.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the past several years since 1970, I have been selfish to observe your hardships,” Mr. Hudson said. “That is why Hudson’s Detroit Motors is proud to present their newest Manager, Charles Benjamin Hudson the forth.”

Ben was stunned as everyone cheered for him, but then his body shook. A bright light shined in his eyes switching back and forth.

“Ben,” his psychologist said as she inspected him. “Ben, can you hear me?”

Ben nodded his head, “Yeah.” He was in his father’s office where the scent of alcohol was still there, everywhere, strong. Broken glass and spilled alcohol was all over the floor by the cabinet.

“Ben was your father drunk again?”

“What’s going on?” Ben frantically stood up searching everywhere, police all around. “We had a small quarrel about the business and him drinking.”

“A neighbor called in a possible robbery. They heard sounds of broken glass. But Ben, did your father try to hurt you?”

Ben felt something sharp in his hand, a piece of bloody glass, “What is this?”

“Ben you need to tell me the truth right now.”

“Tell me where my father is.”

“Ben. Your father’s body is downstairs. He was stabbed in the ribs.”