

The Catch

by Joey Delgado

His granddaughter, Ivy, sat on his knee looking at an old photo album she found under the couch during one of her afternoon explorations. She made him wipe off the dust and cobwebs before he took her through all the pictures, per normal protocol. The album opened with a soft creak from the spine and he was transported back to his youth.

Summer barbecues, Aunt Grace's noodle salad, watermelon juice dripping off his chin, his sisters and aunts in dresses the color of sunshine.

They came to a picture of him holding a rifle. He was sixteen at the time, wearing a suit. He always liked wearing suits on Sundays. His Aunt Grace said a man should wear a suit for church, be presentable for the Lord, and he agreed. He remembered the day so clearly.

They came to their spot, the clearing in the woods. Baylor was able to get through those bumpy paths in his car without a problem. He envied Baylor's driving skills. He didn't think he'd ever be able to afford a car of his own.

It was Johnny who brought the camera. Baylor told him to, said a day like this was too good for just memory.

"Is that you, Grampa?"

"Yep. That's me and your Uncle Baylor. Do you remember Baylor?"

"He died," she said, and he was hurt by the lack of emotion in her voice. Baylor was his mentor, his best friend, for years, up until the day he died.

Their catch was still tied to the tree trying to find a way out of Johnny's dad's handcuffs. It was pointless. Handcuffs in those days were unrelenting. If you happened to find yourself in them, you were in them until you got let out.

Baylor told their catch to stand up, stand up or he'd bust his face in. What choice did he have?

"What were you shooting at?"

"I don't think I should tell you, honey. You'll have nightmares."

"Grampa, I'm tough," said Little Ivy. "Don't you think I'm tough?"

"Of course you are," he said looking down into his granddaughter's sapphire eyes.

Baylor gave him the rifle and told him to aim for the head, right between that rapist nigger's eyes. He fired and missed. The catch tried wrenching his hands free and Baylor hooted. Baylor told him to shoot again. He did. Their catch stilled.

Sometimes he'd feel guilty about what they did, but it was those times. The times were different back then.

"It was a deer."

"You shot a deer," she screamed, accusing. "How could you, Grampa? Deers are so cute!"

"Well, sweetie. Times were different back then."

