

My Father's Stories

My father and I have always loved autumn more than any of the other seasons. We would always go for long walks through the forest. He would tell me stories about his childhood up to the time he went to war. He taught me a lot over the years with all his stories. On one day in particular, he told me a story that I was never able to forget, and it really made me appreciate all that the soldiers had done for us.

The year was 1960. It was late into October and it had just started to get cold enough to put the wood stove on. I was fifteen at the time and had just gotten home from school. As soon as I walked through the front door I can remember my father walking out of his room carrying his shiny thirty-three rifle. After a long day at school I was ready for one of these walks. I ditched my bag of books in my room and dressed up for the cold. I then threw on my favourite boots and followed my father out to the yard, where he checked his gun over to make sure it wouldn't miss fire or anything. Then we headed into the woods on our normal route.

We walked in silence for probably half an hour. Then finally my father broke it by asking a question that I found very odd at the time. He simply asked, "Have you ever wondered why I never actually shoot at anything?"

The question itself shocked me. I thought about it for a moment and realized there had been many opportunities to get a deer or a partridge but he never actually killed anything nor did he ever even just shoot at a tree or can for fun. When I finally finished thinking about it, I nodded. He then took a deep breath and began by saying, "Well, the war really messes with people's heads. Believe it or not I use to love to go out hunting and get a buck or really anything but after the war I developed a different perspective on things."

"What do you mean?" I had asked after waiting a moment for him to continue with no luck.

Then finally he started back up by saying, "What I mean is the war turned me very much against the human race. Probably turned many men against it. You could never even imagine the horrific things that one man would do to another and to think they we all started out as just normal guys who wouldn't even dream of actually killing one another. I always look back and think about how stupid we all were because for some reason we thought it would be a great idea to go off to fight. So now when I go out I refuse to shoot this gun unless we are actually in some kind of danger because after watching many people I was close to die as a result of being shot I have learned that all life is precious and guns are not toys."

He then paused for a moment wiped the tears that had formed away and continued to say, "I have never met an animal as vicious as man, so I won't be the one to take anymore innocent lives away."

His words have never left my mind since that day and it has given me more respect for the ones brave enough to go face each other at war, because I would never want to come face to face with the vicious beast my father called man.

-Hannah Baker