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Going On Ten

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Going On Ten

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"All of a sudden, on Christmas Eve, my old dog Prince decided to die. Me and my dad found him the next day stretched out in front of his doghouse with his leash all twisted around the old Chestnut tree. My dad said that he probably died of a broken heart because he couldn't catch Santa Claus and his reindeer (he thought I still believed in him). But I once heard that when dogs get old they sometimes die of mistemper. Besides, old Prince never would have noticed Santa, because as my dad used to say, "He's deaf in one ear and can't hear a thing out of the other," and he was getting kind of blind too. He was real old, old Prince was. He and I were the same people age, nine, but in dog's age he was a lot older, older than my grandmother who used to stay in bed all the time and cry every time me and my dad went to see her. Old Prince didn't stay in bed though, and he never cried, except for one time when my big brother hit him in the side with a football. But, as I said, old Prince died, so me and my dad scraped away some snow, dug a hole, and buried him. We even put a wooden cross on his grave."

Cover Page Footnote

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GOING ON TEN

By E. P. WALZ

All of a sudden, on Christmas Eve, my old dog Prince decided to die. Me and my dad found him the next day stretched out in front of his doghouse with his leash all twisted around the old chestnut tree. My dad said that he probably died of a broken heart because he couldn't catch Santa Claus and his reindeer (he thought I still believed in him). But I once heard that when dogs get old they sometimes die of mistemper. Besides, old Prince never would have noticed Santa, because as my dad used to say, "He's deaf in one ear and can't hear a thing out of the other," and he was getting kind of blind too. He was real old, old Prince was. He and I were the same people age, nine, but in dog's age he was a lot older, older than my grandmother who used to stay in bed all the time and cry every time me and my dad went to see her. Old Prince didn't stay in bed though, and he never cried, except for one time when my big brother hit him in the side with a football. But, as I said, old Prince died, so me and my dad scraped away some snow, dug a hole, and buried him. We even put a wooden cross on his grave.

The next week, on New Year's Day, we were going to have a Mass for old Prince on the old picnic table behind our garage, with me being priest and Scott and Peter being the altarboys. But it was miserable cold, and I didn't know if you were allowed to say Mass for dogs. So we didn't have anything to do. Especially since we couldn't go over and play in Scott's house. During the winter we usually had our clubhouse in his fruitcellar, but his aunt Rita was visiting so we couldn't play there. His aunt Rita was real fussy. Well, we didn't have anything to do, so we were just walking on the

sidewalk and trying to make snowballs, which usually busted when we threw them hard at trees and trucks and buses. We weren't doing much talking either; we were just walking along kicking snow and not doing much of anything.

When we got to Jenny's Variety Store, which was at the corner, we all stopped to look in the window. It was a big window, and in the wintertime it was usually all frosty, and it had a crack where one of the bigger boys had hit it with a snowball. It also had a silver ledge underneath it which Scott once put his tongue on and got stuck.

"How about some candy," said Scott, keeping away from the ledge.

"No, it's too cold", I said, "it'll be too hard to eat."

"How about some cigarettes then?" This was Peter. He was the youngest, being only eight and a half, while Scott was nine and a half and I was going on ten. But his brother was real big and tough and once got in a fight with my brother and gave him a split lip.

"Candy cigarettes?" I questioned, looking real mad because I'd just said it was too cold for candy.

"No, real ones."

Scott and I just stared at him, we didn't know what to say. Finally I told him so, I didn't feel like having any today. Peter called me a chicken and said that I never smoked a cigarette in my whole life. I told him that I smoked more than he ever thought of smoking, but that I wasn't in the mood right now, and besides, I didn't have enough money.

"We can pool our money," yelled Peter, "they only cost a quarter. I know because I've gotten some for my big brother."

I didn't want to stand there and argue forever, and we really didn't have anything to do, and Scott was giving me the funny eye, so I gave in to them. We each chipped in eight cents and Peter put in the extra penny. But he and Scott waited outside while I went in.

There were two other people in the store besides me and the man that owned it. An old man was being waited on at the magazine counter. Over by the Greeting Cards there was a lady, but I couldn't tell if she was young or old because she had her nose buried in some cards. I pulled my collar up and tipped the brim of my hat down like I'd seen in the movies and on television so that the man couldn't recognize me. I stopped and flipped through a couple of comics on the book rack. I even looked at the candy counter to make everything seem natural. When the old man began to leave, I headed for the cigarette counter.

"Can I have a pack of cigarettes for my father?" I said, going as fast as I could.

"What kind does he smoke, son?" the man asked.

I didn't know what to say. The woman started to come over from the card rack. I hesitated. The man behind the counter seemed to squint so as to get a better look at my face.

"Luckies," I squeaked. I could feel the tears running down my cheeks.

"That'll be a quarter, son," he said loudly.

I dropped the money onto the little round pad with the little nipples on it and reached for the pack of cigarettes. Just then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Hi, Gene, since when did your father start smoking?" It was Peter's mother, she had been looking for a Birthday card.

I dropped the cigarettes and raced for the door. They were both calling after me, Peter's mother and the store owner. But I didn't stop. I didn't even stop for Peter and Scott. It wasn't until I was in my garage that I stopped running. Right then and there I promised old Prince that I would never smoke a single cigarette in my whole life. After all, I never smoked one when he was alive, and just because he had to die was no reason for me to start. But most important, I promised not to tell another lie, because my dad had told both me and old Prince that it never came to anything but no good.