

Trip to the Tip

Word Count: 1,650

Despite all their efforts to outrun the brooding weather, the girls' trip to the tip had suddenly taken on a new state of urgency. Rain Thundered down on the family's blue station wagon like an abandoned, rusting sardine can now exposed to the elements. Deep puddles filled the uneven, dirt driveway and the normally rowdy dogs were huddled for shelter under the veranda; whining to be let inside.

"Hurry UP!" Yelled Vanessa, dragging four, large bags of rubbish out of the house.

"But Nessa.." Amy whinged, "it's *too* wet to go now..can't we just go tomorrow?"

"No!" Vanessa snapped, slamming the front door of the second- hand car; her voice raising as she squashed the bags of rubbish onto the large pile in the back. "The tip's closed tomorrow, *remember?* It's shut on weekends".

Amy stood under the eave of the house, out of the downpour; trying to decide whether it was worth fighting her older sister once she'd made a decision like this one.

"But it's raining *bad* now Nessa," Amy frowned, lowering the bags in her cold hands and looking out at the black sky. "And we could get bogged going now...I don't want to go, it's stupid!"

Vanessa fumed,

"You little brat, get in the car NOW!"

She marched over to Amy and snatched the two grey bags, slamming the boot door down onto the now ready to explode pile; and climbing into the front seat. Amy sighed in defeat and made a dash for the passenger side door-the bucketing rain soaking her in seconds. After wrestling with the broken doorhandle, she fell onto the seat-saturated from the open window.

"Oh, what?" Amy complained, feeling the slippery vinyl beneath her.

"What NOW? Demanded Vanessa, her patience snapping.

"Nothing.." Amy grumbled, sulking to herself more than to Vanessa. She knew further whining would get her no-where. Instead, she pulled the glass pane of the faulty

window up as high as it would go with icy fingers, and (being a girl of thirteen years) whinged silently in her head at the state of the situation and her completely unfair treatment.

Vanessa forced her glasses higher up the bridge of her nose, raked her long, wet hair from her face and frowned to see through the blurry lenses.

"Come on..." She grumbled, pumping the accelerator to kick the car over. "Come ON!" She yelled again, wiping her face dry with the back of her arm.

"Vroom!" The car suddenly rumbled into life and shuddered awake, its headlights glowing a dull orange-yellow.

She slowly turned the car around, mud flicking up as the weathered bomb pulled itself forward and rattled down the long, bumpy driveway; the rubbish creaking and clanging with cans and bottles in the back.

They made their way down the muddy street like a crazed wedding car of celebratory decorations and turned onto the highway for Wentworth. Still the rain pummelled down, only now lightening could be seen illuminating patches of far off, angry clouds over bare land and low trees; rumbling with thunder the closer they came.

Amy looked back, embarrassed at the bulging black and grey plastic mound now as high as the roof of the car; and slid a little lower in her seat. What if someone sees me? She worried, and then worse- what if the car breaks down altogether in the middle of the main street for all to see the sad little car of trash?

"Please God", Amy secretly begged, "Please let the car make it quickly through the street so no-one sees us".

Luckily for Amy, the town was mostly deserted however except for the usual teens surrounding the take-away stores in Winter for hot chips and gravy. Amy avoided their hooded gaze and looked the other way, hands clenched in a bid to keep the car moving. She concentrated on the floor and her muddy sneakers and hoped ridiculously that by not looking at anyone, no-one would see them rattle past.

A sign past Fisher's supermarket lead the way to the local landfill, a fair drive away on any occasion; let alone in torrential rain conditions like these. After following the

highway for some time, the car finally lurched past the high wire fence of the tip and rumbled up to the wide entrance of familiar red signage and desertion. The car let out a low throaty cough and spluttered as though threatening to cut out altogether, making Amy nervous and tense up in her seat.

“Oh my....” She said in a high, anxious voice. The car seemed tiny on the wide, washed out track and the two girls could barely see a thing in front of them for the brown waterfall of dirt and rain flowing over the car. There was no-one else to be seen.

“I can’t look, I can’t look, arghh!” Amy cried, covering her eyes as they drove on through the rain.

Somehow Vanessa inched the car on though, trying to stay on higher ground until eventually they could both see the edge of the tip’s crevice; filled with mounds of discarded garbage. Vanessa stopped the car with a horrible sludge-like sound and pulled up the handbrake, keeping the car running as though scared it mightn’t re-start. The headlights dipped lazily off, then on without any reason; propelling Vanessa into action.

“Come on!” She yelled, grabbing bags of rubbish and forcing her door open. Amy drew in a quick breath, gripped the rubbish bags tight and followed. She squinted to see Vanessa through the rain and began laughing hysterically at the horrible situation, the cold wind whipping her face; and the sight of both of them trying to run like drunken scarecrows through the mud. Reaching the edge of the tip, the girls flung the bags over the side; listening to them fly momentarily and then crash loudly with tin and broken glass. After two more trips back to the car, the girls finally slammed themselves inside, panting and laughing at their accomplishment; and drenched to the bone.

They gingerly turned the car around and had gotten probably half way down the main track, when the front wheels bumped through a deep pothole and suddenly stopped.

“Arrgghh!” screamed Amy, pulling her knees up. Things seemed to only be getting worse. Vanessa tried in vain to drive out of the ditch, but the back wheels merely spun horribly with a weary groan against the squelching mud.

“Oh my gosh..” Amy cried again, her forehead furrowing and eyes bulging. She grabbed the side of her door, afraid and looked out her window in the haze of rain for any sign of

help; but it was useless. They hadn't seen a single person since they'd arrived, not that visibility was really possible at all. Amy stared out sadly, imagining the faint glimmers of warm glow from far off houses and ruefully imagined every other person in Curlwaa and Wentworth all warm and cosy inside; made worse by the fact that the two of them could have been home warm too.

"Bloody hell.." Vanessa sighed, thumping the steering wheel. Looking up though, she caught Amy's eye in the silence and they both laughed again at the bad to worse situation. They looked out gloomily at the still heavy rain, listening to it pound down on the roof. Vanessa considered turning the headlights off to conserve the car's battery.

Suddenly though, a murky shape started heading in their direction. Both girls sat up abruptly. It grew steadily larger and eventually they could make out a white ute, heading along the track they'd just come from. It stopped a short distance from the car, rumbling on large, sturdy wheels. Amy's heart leaped into her throat, as they watched two men in Akubra hats get out and walk over to Vanessa's side of the car. Vanessa cleared her throat, quickly wound down her window and smiled sheepishly at the approaching men.

"Hello.." she laughed, slightly embarrassed.

"You girls alright?" asked the older man, squinting into the car "You look a bit stuck." He said in a matter-of-fact way. He wore a large Drizabone jacket and a friendly, old smile.

"Yeah," replied Vanessa, "Think we hit a pothole?"

"Yeah probly, by the looks of things I'd say so" the man said, looking the back wheels over, "Not to worry" he said, rain dripping off his hat, "Should be able to push you out".

"Thankyou" both girls smiled, relieved to have been found. The two men went to the rear of the car, the older one shouting to Vanessa to put it into first gear and accelerate when he told her to. They felt a sudden shove from behind as the men pushed the back of the car forward,

"All right, NOW!" yelled the man, still pushing. Vanessa gently nudged the accelerator to avoid the tyres spinning again and felt the car lurch hesitantly out of the hole and forward. The men waved goodbye to the girls, who waved happily back.

“Thank you!” They shouted out their windows, waving either side. It was a miracle. As they made their way down the dirt track, still buzzing from the amazing turn of events, Vanessa said;

“Who *were* they?” Looking into her rear vision mirror, “And *where* did they come from?”

“I dunno” Amy laughed, just as surprised. The grey sky still rumbled with thunder and heavy rain as before, as though nothing had changed, and everything still *looked* the same. And yet everything else, the girls- weren’t the same. Then Vanessa said something Amy would never forget:

“Do you think they were *angels*?” She asked, surprisingly bright-eyed and in awe. Then urgently, she said “Amy, quick! Turn around, are they still there? Can you see them?” But they were gone, just as quickly as they’d miraculously appeared; leaving nothing but the constant drum of rain and the joyous linger of hope behind.