

# The Day Off

for my brother

He woke up.

Today was the day.

This was it, this was the moment, he had worked for it his whole life, it was here, it had happened, and he could only do one thing.

He exhaled.

Then, in order of importance, he kissed his love on the cheek and, for probably the first time ever, walked downstairs to fix a cup of coffee before her.

The sun shone through the window to their kitchen. He looked out and saw a squirrel scamper up a tree, startling the birds that quickly flew off.

He took out the coffee grinds, and poured them into his coffee machine.

He was tired. Very tired. And of course, immediately his mind sifted through all the things he had to do later that day.

Or perhaps, he would do them all tomorrow. There was no rush, anymore.

His role was to merely reinforce what the structure he had spent his whole life building, and that can be done patiently, without a sense of urgency, now.

The coffee dribbled into the pot, and he opened the fridge to make breakfast, deciding to make it for two.

Time passed, and they sat together at the table, smiling after finishing an amazing breakfast pie of ice cream, banana, Oreos, assorted salted nuts, cake sprinkles and some food colouring.

Their coffee sat, lukewarm, in their cups, because they had the time.

Hardly a word was spoken.

What could be said?

The heartburn from the pie was softly picking away at their longevity, but it didn't matter. He could die today, he thought, but of course he would rather not.

"What are we supposed to do, now?" she asked.

He paused, and smiled.

“I don’t think we have to do much”, he replied. “Maybe we can just sit on the couch?”

She looked at him, and, smiling, got up and made her way there. He followed.

The cushions embraced their bodies, and they sat there, sipping their lukewarm coffee.

The clock struck 10.

Then 11.

Then 12.

At 1pm, he used the washroom.

What absolute bliss, he thought when he sat on the toilet. I could be here for half an hour.

At 1:30, she knocked and they switched places.

What absolute bliss, thought she, I could stay here for an hour.

And that’s what she did.

Without a readers digest, even.

Reconvening at the couch at around 3:00, he said,

“I have about 3425 vertical lines on my fingernails.”

He had counted them while she was on the toilet.

He was proud.

“I haven’t even counted my toenails yet,” he continued.

She smiled gently, lovingly, at him.

“I’m happy for you”, she said.

He smiled back.

At around 4, they switched places on the couch to experience the difference in springiness. Her side was decidedly more springy.

At 5, he did something he had meant to do for a while, and she watched.

It was like it had been an unsaid plan for years.

He thumped downstairs to his study, and got all of the childhood books he had saved all these years, ones that he loved dearly.

He took them out, and replaced, one by one, the books on the shelf that he would need no more.

The energy in the room felt warm, it felt cozy, it felt like they could just curl up and read children's books for the rest of the day.

After replacing all those unneeded books, he took them out to the side of the road, and left them in a box.

They were quickly picked up as soon as they were noticed, to be composted.

Well now it was 6, and they nestled back into the couch together, sipping their (now quite cold) coffee.

"Want to take turns choosing children's books to read from the shelf?"

He asked this with an almost indescribably large amount of yearning.

She paused for only a slight moment, enough for him to question whether this was, in fact, the day.

And it was.

"Yes, absolutely", she responded.

He beamed, and before she could say anything, he was over at the shelf, lightly touching the spines of the books, whispering to himself,

"What's the first book I want to read?"

His hand stopped exactly where it needed to, and he pulled it out and came back to the couch.

She couldn't contain her delight when she saw it -

"I didn't know we had that book! Where did you get it?"

"I just asked for it...", he said, secretively.

“Oh, come on, tell me!”

He thought to himself for a while.

About 15 minutes later he said,

“OK, sure, I’ll tell you”.

*“Once upon a time, there was a boy. This boy grew up quickly. Perhaps he grew up too quickly. Sometimes that happens, and when that happens, you had best watch out, because there will come a time when the boy needs to grow down again. In any case, he grew up, and immediately, had things to do. Many, many things. And, well, he did like most of it. Much of it was simply taking care of things. Of people. Of places. Of things. But some of it was certainly a little trickier, and it didn’t take long before the boy felt a need to grow down, again.*

*After a while, he started slowing down. It was like a watch whose battery was just barely hanging on. But of course, the world needs you to tick, so you tick. You keep ticking until each tick is a minute in between, then an hour, then a day, until suddenly you feel like you aren’t ticking.*

*That day came, when it had been a year, and there was still no tick. So, the boy assumed it was time to grow down.*

*He proceeded by changing the way he was with things. Gone were the days of trying. He let things happen, and that helped him grow down.*

*He also started walking more, and he grew down even further.*

*He sought out his favourite toy to play with, and that really, really helped.*

*Finally, he thought, I need to grow down, once and for all. I would like my favourite book back.*

*A while passed.*

*One day, he was walking with his favourite toy, watching things pass by as they do, and he noticed things had changed around him.*

*All of the signs that he had hoped for were there, and although just beginning, he knew that it was time.*

*He asked the tree, right to his left, for his favourite book, and looking down, he saw it, resting against a root.*

*He picked it up, and put it in the basement*

*for the day  
when he would be ready  
to read it.”*

They sat together on the couch, after he finished telling this story.

He paused, and she looked at him expectantly.

And so, there they were, holding this book on the couch, wondering what was within.

It had not been read for a very, very long time.

After a few minutes of looking at its beautiful, brown, rough cover, after running their hands over the thick edges, over the waves that were made solid, they opened it.

And out came leaves,

nothing but leaves.

And their home smelled of autumn.

And their floor was many colours.

And the leaves spilled out of their door,

to make the soil they had been asking for.

And they sat there, on the couch,  
enjoying each of their senses:

Their taste with the coffee.

Their sight with the colour and each other.

Their smell of the leaves.

Their touch of the cushions.

Their hearing of the faint,

faint,

voice,

whispering what they had always wanted to hear.

