

# Memories

I lifted the gas can and unscrewed the top. The sweet smell of the gas reminded me of all the pleasant Saturday mornings I'd spent mowing the grass. I was about to do it again, possibly for the last time.

After filling the tank, I pushed the mower out to the lawn in front of the house and started it. The familiar roar of the small engine was like an old friend as I began to cut the grass in front of the windows.

I remembered the first time my wife Alicia and I had seen this house. We'd walked up to these very windows and looked in, trying to decide if we liked the place. We'd fallen in love with the huge yard and the well maintained wood floors that connected all the rooms. We'd purchased it a week later.

As I pushed the mower toward the side of the building, I made the usual circle around the large maple tree, the one that always seemed to provide shade, even on the hottest days. I remembered making love to my wife on a blanket under that tree on a warm spring day, soon after we'd moved in. My wife was now long gone to a better place, but I missed her so much!

I continued to cut the grass, moving now to the large expanse of grass behind the house. The swing set I had built for my two sons, when they were two and three, had stood right there. And we'd tossed a baseball back and forth here too. Those had been fun times. My sons were grown now, and living far away, with their own families, in their own homes. But it was good to remember.

Towards the back of the yard, the mower coughed briefly as it encountered the longer grass, as it always did. Right here was where we'd found the puppy, abandoned by its owner and bleeding badly from its feet. I'd wanted to take it in to the vet to have it put down, but Alicia and the boys would have none of it. They insisted we keep him, and Bailey became part of our family. He was with us for almost eighteen years, before passing away in his sleep one snowy evening in December. That had been a sad time.

And there was the huge oak tree, looking pretty barren now. But once, its strong limbs had been a home for squirrels, and as a result, a favourite hangout for Bailey. This was where my oldest boy had fallen from a branch and broken his arm. He's had the cast on for weeks, and was really proud of all the things his friends had written on it.

After finishing the back yard, I began to cut the long strip on the other side of our home. The shade here had been perfect for taking pictures. Both my sons had posed for graduation photos here, with their mother and I proudly looking on. On each of their wedding days, we continued the tradition by taking pictures of them and all of the families.

Towards the front of the house, I began cutting the long strip next to the driveway. It was here that I'd driven into our yard and parked for the last time, after finally deciding to give up my job as a city bus driver. Strangely, after that, I never drove much. Alicia did most of the driving ... at least, until she got sick.

The last piece of lawn to cut was always my favourite, the strip on either side of the sidewalk. You had to be careful, because some of the paving stones had settled at odd angles, and stuck up more than they should have. More than once I'd tripped on one of them. It was something I'd always meant to fix ... just one more thing I'd never gotten around to.

As I pushed the mower back towards its resting place under the shed awning, I reflected that this would probably be the last time I'd cut the grass. It would probably be good for two or three weeks, and the doctors had said that in all likelihood I wouldn't have that long. The boys will be home tomorrow, and I wanted to have the place looking nice for them.

I've always enjoyed cutting the grass. I'll miss it.