

“Boxing Day”

by Jefferson Marshall

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“Well open it already, Sport,” Grandpa chuckled.

My present was wrapped in bright red and white paper with a green bow on top.

Mom nodded with an approving smile.

I tore into the packaging. It was a shoebox...

“Did you get me shoes?” I asked.

“Thank you,” I said, disappointed, but giving my best smile.

“No silly. Look inside the shoebox,” said Grandma.

A wave of relief swept through me. The shoebox was meant to keep me guessing. Inside the shoebox was another box. I could tell by the look of this box that it didn’t contain the typical white ankle socks and oversized golfing shirt I was accustomed to receiving every Christmas.

I opened the box. Inside was a pair of boxing gloves and a balloon.

“The balloon is an air-up punching bag,” smiled Grandpa.

“Oh wow!” I said, beaming from ear to ear. I jumped up to hug my grandparents. “Thank you so much! I love them!”

“Well, you’re welcome. We figured a ten-year-old like yourself could probably be old enough to enjoy a pair of boxing gloves.”

“If you ask nicely, maybe your Grandpa will blow up the punching bag for you,” said Grandma.

“Will you please, Grandpa?”

“I’d love to,” He said. Setting his cup of coffee down, he scooted to the floor, using the couch as a back rest.

“Let me help you with those gloves,” said Mom.

“You know,” said Grandma, “Your grandfather was quite a boxer in his day.”

“Really Grandpa?”

Grandpa smiled slyly then continued to blow up the punching bag.

“He was the Champion Feather Weight of his entire Regiment in the war, so if you ask him nicely, he might even show you a move or two.”

“Will you Grandpa?”

He stood up. “I’ll finish blowing that bag up after.”

“But we’ve only got one pair of gloves,” I said.

“You take the right hand, and I’ll be a southpaw.”

“Okay Grandpa, but I’ll go easy on you since you’re old and stuff.”

“No problem, Sport.”

Poor Grandpa. I danced around him, just like I’d seen Rocky do in all those movies. I juke left, then right, jumped, and then ducked.

There was no way he’d be able to catch me, or so I thought.

I saw something in Grandpa’s eyes that I’d never seen before: a strange twinkle, wild and youthful. I was in trouble.

I watched helplessly as he bent low with his right foot planted forward. He swung his left arm up quickly from his left hip in an uppercut. He made hard, solid contact with the underside of my chin. POW. The full force of the blow lifted me clean off the ground. I was airborne for

an eternity before I came rushing back down to earth. CRASH. I landed right into the middle of the Christmas tree. Tangled in lights. Surrounded by shattered ornaments.

He smiled down at me. Shocked, I smiled back.

“Thanks for going easy on the old man, Sport. Merry Christmas.”