

Ode to my Father's Boots

I'm an old guy now, but when I was younger, I used to go around with the thought that my father gave me nothing, or very little, or next to nothing.

And then, one day, I remembered his boots.

My father worked for the water dept. in my home town. It was called the Water Works, which meant when a pipe burst under the street, down he and crew went. It was a job of mud, and pipes, and drilling. I never considered the way he knew the streets, what gushed from pipe to kitchen, how his touched boiled coffee and filled tubs.

And with the work came boots. Huge, orange or yellow waders that only a firefighter could top. And he always had a pair for me.

No boy had shoes bigger than those barges. Slip them over whatever you had laced your feet around, and laugh at the slush puddles of the great, grey, snow-fucked streets.

This went on for a few years, and ended when he was promoted. He rose to the rank of a driver, which meant, no digging, no drilling, no fixing what time and wear brings to the things we bury. The way I understand it, he drove his crew to the hole, and sat in the cab. He rose from the sweat, and the boots couldn't follow.

But I knew for a while, how envy could dart, from a boy's eye like lightening from his sad boots, to mine, that damp anger.

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