



7th Grade Best of the Best, Round 3

Georgie

*by Bethany Settler
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I stepped outside of our Australian ranch house and stood on our dusty porch.

“Georgie!” I called. My strong voice, husky from spending so much time yelling to sheep, cut through the air. George would come.

At the first glimpse of his furry body, I raced down the front steps. “Georgie!” I laughed, jubilated. We wrestled in the yard for a few moments. Then I handed over his dinner of leftover stew. Gobbling it up, he yelped for more.

You might think it strange for a sheep herder’s son to have a pet dingo. Of course, the typical dingo will stalk sheep at night, killing them off one by one. But George was an exceptional specimen of the dingo. I had found him as an orphaned pup, the last living one in the litter.

In this way he reminded me of myself. Mum and Dad had given birth to several children before me, but all had died before reaching their first birthday. Mum said I was the strong one. Yet they regarded me as a weak child, always needing their attention and help. Georgie was my escape from all of that. Of course, dingoes were prohibited on any part of our sheep farm. Dad had no idea that I was nightly smuggling Georgie into my room. Georgie had been raised around sheep, but his hunting instincts still kicked in when he was alone near our fields. I felt guilty sometimes. But I had George.

Everything was fine. For a while. But George, like everyone else, grew up. I could no longer hide him under my bed, so he was forced to spend his wandering outside. One morning, Dad found one of our young lambs. Dead.

He stormed inside, face red as a tomato. He was furious. “How could a dingo get past our fences?” he exploded. “I built those fences myself. Dingo proof!”

I knew that it had been Georgie. He was the only dingo who could scale the high walls around our property. I had taught him how to perform this task. Ashamed, I stared down into my bowl of shredded wheat.

“Do you know anything about this, Ben?” he continued, pounding his fist on the



table. I stared up at his contorted face, yet was saved from answering.

"Really, Bill" Mum stepped in. "You think Ben could have let a dingo in?"

I put on my best innocent face, but inside I was burning with guilt.

Dad sighed. "No, I'm just mad, is all. Next time I see a dingo on our farm, I'm shooting it."

Terrified, I ran outside. Dad couldn't shoot Georgie! My best friend. My brother. My pet.

"Georgie!" I frantically screamed. He appeared, and seemed to be smiling at the sight of me. "Go away, Georgie!" I warned. "Far, far away!"

It was too late. Dad had seen George. There was a sharp crack, then Georgie began whimpering. Drops of ruby blood spurted from his shoulder like a fountain.

"No!" I yelled, hugging my dingo close. "Georgie!" Despite my efforts, George slowly went limp in my hands. Dad ran out of the house, slamming the screen door behind him.

"He was my friend!" I shouted accusingly. "And you killed him!" I felt like crying. "Killed him!"

My dad looked confused, then shook his head. "Sheep herders can't have dingoes as pet," he explained. "I can see that you loved him. But he was killing our sheep. Our livelihood. I'm sorry, son. But it couldn't have worked out."

He looked so sad, crouching in our side yard, next to Georgie's lifeless body. Deep in my soul, I realized that he was right. I also discovered that being honest with my parents is more important than anything else. I vowed never to lie to them again.

I threw my arms around Dad, finally crying. "I'm sorry," I whispered. He murmured an apology, also. And I knew that it was sincere. Because his tears melded with my own.