

This story is about the gypsy culture, and is set in Australia in the 1930's, at the start of the Great Depression.

I run on the cool golden sand, the dappled shimmery sun blinding my eyes. I look up to see the soft orangey pink sunset like soft feathers. My long, lithe legs propel me forward, in front of Hazel and Bobby, my seven year old twin siblings.

They laugh as they try to catch up to me. Giggling too, I collapse on the soft sand and they fall down next to me in a tumble of smiles and grubby, ragged clothes and identical freckles.

They look so happy and playful right now, silhouetted against the sunset. They remind me of Daisy, our Border Collie dog, when she was a puppy. Lately she has been quiet and withdrawn, and I don't know what's wrong. Right now I wish more than anything that I could take her to the veterinarian, but that would cost many pounds we don't have.

Our money must be spent on cotton to make our clothes, grain to make our bread, and soap and the like. But even food nowadays is hard to come by. When my mother goes to the market there is many tired looking men and women lining up for rations. No matter how many bracelets we sell or how many farms we help out on, there isn't enough food to go around the town. Once when I was at the markets, I found a newspaper on the ground which spoke of the Great Depression, and how the stock market is crashing.

The sunset blurs as we run back to our small caravan. I put all my worries out of my head as my mother taught me to do back when I was very small.

My mother greets us at the door and as we tuck into freshly baked bread and homegrown vegies, Daisy sits morosely under the table, not begging for scraps as she usually does. She reminds me of Mum when Dad first left. I was so small and didn't understand why her eyes were so empty, not even a shadow of a smile left on her lips.

"Daisy girl," I call to her in a desperate attempt to cheer her up. She glances at me with sadness in her eyes. Hazel and Bobby notice this, and Hazel mentions in a sad little voice, "Mummy, Daisy's not well."

"Oh honey, I think she'll be fine," Mum says comfortably. I'm not so sure, and the delicious warm bread goes limp and tasteless in my mouth.

The morning dew glistens on the leaves, the peaceful silence only interrupted by the occasional bird call. I sit quietly on the old swing that my dad and I made when I was small, before my dad left, when Daisy was just a bouncy puppy, when everything was perfect.

Around the corner is the border of McKelvie's farm. He has many sheep, cows and horses, and sets poisoned traps to kill feral cats, foxes and rabbits.

My old boot scuffs the soft grass below me, and stops on something soft and stiff. I look down to see a dead rabbit, mangled almost to the point of being unrecognizable. My heart sinks to the bottom of my shoes as I realise that it was shredded apart by sharp teeth.

*Daisy.*

I dash back to our campsite on the beach. As I open the door, my eyes fill with tears as I see Daisy whimpering on the colourful bed. What killed the rabbit before is killing Daisy now, and it's killing me to see her like this. I rush to her and cradle her in my arms. Her body is shaking like an autumn leaf being blown away by the cruel winter wind. Yet her fur is as soft and comforting as ever.

I sing to her gentle lullabies that I used to calm Hazel and Bobby when they were babies. After a while, my mother, Hazel and Bobby join me, sit down around Daisy and me and start to sing along.

Soon tears are streaming down our faces but we don't bother to wipe them away. Not now. My long hair falls in my face and tears drip from my eyes, dampening my eyelashes and clouding my vision.

After what seems like hours of cradling Daisy softly in my arms, quietly, soundlessly, she falls still.