

Time Flyz
By
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A BEND IN THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER SITUATED IN A DEEP GORGE

Late in the afternoon, AILEAN INNES(70), thigh deep in the river, ties a small trout fly on the end of the leader connected to his fly line with palsied hands. He strips out some fly line, false casts with perfect technique and makes his presentation. The fly drifts down the river into the target seam.

THE FLY LINE GOES TIGHT AND THE ROD TIP BENDS

Ailean lands and nets the fish, admires its beauty, resuscitates and sets it free. He wipes his hands on the bib of his waders, flips the landing net backwards over his shoulder to hang by its lanyard, shakes some fly line out and casts again. He hooks another...fishy acrobatics...land and repeat.

A BLUFF HIGH ABOVE THE RIVER

The sound of the river reverberates in the gorge. Aileen's sons, JOSH(40) and CODY(39) intently watch their father fishing below. They exchange glances then look back to Ailean.

CODY

Nothing changes. He fishes so old. Still a helluva fisherman. Me, I'm gonna' be all up and down the river throwing at anything that rises, he just never moves.

Josh ponders his brother's comment without response.

JOSH(V.O.)

Some things do change. Living a few hundred miles away is insulation from harsh reality.

Cody starts down the bluff toward the river. Josh follows momentarily.

A SANDY WASH AT THE EDGE OF THE RIVER

Already in his waders, Cody splashes in toward Ailean. Josh props his fly rod against a huge drift log and sits to watch.

IN THE RIVER

(CONTINUED)

Cody and Aileen converse briefly. Aileen offers Cody a fly from his box. Tucking his rod underarm, Cody ties it to his leader then splashes away up river and out of sight.

JOSH SITTING ON THE DRIFTWOOD

The Yellowstone murmurs and gurgles. Josh rises, dons his waders, then sits down on the log again. He wiggles his toes in the stocking feet of the waders before lacing his boots back on. Scanning the air above the river in all directions he notes no insect hatch.

A LIGHT BREEZE GENTLY MOVES THE LIMBS OF THE WILLOWS AND COTTONWOODS GROWING IN CLUSTERS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER.

A LONE OSPREY PLIES THE AIR CURRENTS ABOVE THE CANYON.

Josh pulls a locket hanging from a chain around his neck from inside his shirt, opens it. A smiling older woman gazes back. He closes and kisses the locket, returning it inside his shirt. Pulling a worn fly box from his fishing vest, he opens and studies the contents.

JOSH(V.O.)

My father gave me this fly box when
I turned seven. Most folks think
it just holds flies... they'd be
wrong.

JOSH DRIFTS BACK TO CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF FIRST FLY FISHING LESSONS FROM AILEAN.

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INT.JOSH AND CODY'S BEDROOM, INNES RANCH-NIGHT

2

Josh(6) stares restlessly at the ceiling above his bed in the pre-dawn hours of his seventh birthday. Suddenly younger brother Cody(5) pounces from his nearby bed, mischievous and giggling, into Josh's view.

JOSH

(startled, miffed)
What do you want?

CODY

(giggling)
Happy birthday! This is your
birthday wake-up scare!

JOSH

Yeah, yeah...

(CONTINUED)

CODY
Do you think he'll really do it?

JOSH
Who? Do what?

CODY
Dad. Is he really gonna' show you
how to cast the fly rod?

Ailean(36), who quietly entered the room undetected,
interrupts.

AILEAN
(faux sternness)
Here here now, what's all this
chatter from boys who oughta' be
asleep!

Ailean sits on the edge of Josh's bed and places a wrapped
gift.

AILEAN
(continuing)
You'll be needing this later
today. Happy Birthday! Now you
boys get some sleep. We have a
busy day ahead.

Ailean rises and ghosts from the room. Josh, speechless,
switches on a lamp beside his bed and tears into the
wrapping paper to find a fly box. The brothers marvel at the
assortment of trout flies it contains then share a laugh
before Josh shoos Cody back to his bed.

JOSH
Maybe this answers the
question. Now get back over to
your own bed.

Cody complies. Josh turns off the lamp, cuddling the gift to
his chest as he drifts off to sleep.

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EXT.INNES RANCH-DAY

3

A PASTURE ON THE INNES RANCH BORDERED BY THE YELLOWSTONE
RIVER ON ONE SIDE AND A RURAL COUNTY ROAD OPPOSITE

Seated on the ground nearby, Josh and Cody watch mesmerized
as Aileen begins the fly casting lesson.

(CONTINUED)

AILEAN

Okay boys, the secret to fly casting is rhythm. Back cast to the one position - count one, two - forward cast to the eleven position - count three, four. Keep you wrist stiff, a bit of snap at the end of the motions will tighten your loop.

Ailean pauses, studies the finely crafted bamboo fly rod in his hand.

AILEAN

(continuing)

Your Grandpa gave me this rod when I was not much older than you two.

(pauses)

You ready to try, Josh?

Josh solemnly rises from his seat and takes the fly rod from Ailean. His first attempts are awkward, unsuccessful. Kneeling beside him, Aileen cradles Josh from behind and shepherds him through the motion.

AILEAN

(tenderly)

It's like this son. Feel the fly line bend the rod? That's called loading.

After a few repetitions, Ailean releases Josh's hand. He gradually improves. Cody quietly absorbs the lesson.

CODY

(a little whiny)

I want to try, I want to try...

AILEAN

(gentle but firm)

Today's Josh's birthday. Let him practice. Maybe he'll show you later.

CODY

(resigned but brightening)

Oh, all right. Will you Josh, huh, will you?

Self absorbed in casting practice, Josh ignores Cody. Just before Ailean can quietly slip away...

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Hey Dad, when are we going
fishing? You promised, remember?

Ailean pauses.

AILEAN

When you get casting down we'll go
to the river. Remember, there's
fly casting and there's fly fishing
- the two aren't necessarily the
same.

Josh and Cody watch Aileen's departure. Josh resumes
practice. Time passes.

RURAL ROAD BORDERING THE INNES PASTURE WHERE JOSH IS
PRACTICING

A couple of teenage rowdies pass by in a pick-up truck. The
driver yells out the window.

ROWDY DRIVER

Hey Kid!!! There ain't no fish out
there.

Mocking laughter from the pranksters boils out the truck
windows. Snapped from his blissful oblivion, face flushed
with embarrassment, anger rising, Josh shakes his fist at
the disappearing vehicle.

JOSH

(shrilly at the top of his
lungs)
Assholes!

Cody mimics Josh...

CODY

Assholes!

Josh glances at Cody, they laugh.

JOSH

Guess it's time to head on back to
the house. Morning chores are
waitin'. Besides, my shoulder is
gettin' kinda' tired.

Josh reels up the fly line. Rod propped across his right
shoulder, the two walk side by side toward their house.

JOSH(40) STILL SITTING ON THE DRIFT LOG BESIDE THE RIVER

Josh returns to the present from his reflection, staring at the assortment of trout flies in the fly box before finally choosing one. To gain the last of afternoon light above the gorge, he holds the fly and tippet up to the sky and begins to tie the fly to the tippet.

JOSH(V.O.)

I fish dries. With no hatch tonight, it's a matter of experimentation anyway so it'll be a 16 Adams.

Josh hooks the fly lightly to the cork rod handle, leans the rod against the drift log and then laces on his boots over the wader socks. Rising, he picks up his rod and wades into the river in Ailean's general direction.

THE RIVER PULSES AND SWIRLS AROUND JOSH'S LEGS AS HE REACHES KNEE-DEEP DEPTH

A whitefish greedily gobbles the fly on Josh's first cast. He plays it to his landing net and releases the fish. Another cast produces the same results.

JOSH(V.O.)

Okay whitefish, it's nice to bend the rod but I'm after your cousins the bows, cutts and browns.

(emphatically)

So leave my fly alone!

With floatant gel removed from a pocket of his fly vest, Josh dresses the fly so it will float better again. He makes five more casts without a bite. Cody startles him from very close behind.

CODY

How are you doin', brother?

JOSH

Where'd you come from?

CODY

Upstream a ways. They bit pretty good up there.

JOSH

Well, I just started. Couple of Whities...gettin' ready to try that seam over there.

(CONTINUED)

Josh points with his rod, then, remembering their father, glances around Cody to see Ailean no longer in the River.

JOSH
Where'd he go?

CODY
Over on that log you were sitting on.

JOSH
Okay.

CODY
He don't seem the same.

JOSH
Whaddya' mean?

CODY
Since Mom died.

JOSH
Yeah, well that was five years ago.

CODY
Five years...guess time flies.

JOSH
Kinda' miss you around here.
Thought of movin' back?

CODY
Not really...job's going good.
Carol has the house like she wants it. The kids love their school.

JOSH
You fishin' here?

CODY
Nah, gonna take a look around the bend where I landed that big brownie last year.

Josh watches Cody splash away then looks toward Ailean.

AILEAN SITTING ON THE LARGE DRIFT LOG WHERE JOSH SAT EARLIER. THE LATE AFTERNOON LIGHT IS RAPIDLY TRANSITIONING TO DUSK.

Ailean sits hunched forward, elbows on his knees, hands clasped, gaze transfixed into the river. Josh wades out of the river, Ailean doesn't react. Josh eyes him for a moment...

JOSH

What was working for you out there?

Josh's question break's Ailean's trance but the tone of his reply lacks familiarity.

AILEAN

A nymph. Got any?

JOSH

Nah, those are just a notch above bait.

Ailean removes a fly box from his vest, plucks out a nymph pattern and offers it to Josh.

AILEAN

Here. Don't be proud.

Josh accepts the small fly from Ailean.

JOSH

(jokingly)

Thanks. Appreciate you keepng this to yourself, wouldn't want it to get out.

Ailean studies Josh as he clips off the Adams fly, returns it to his fly box, then ties on the nymph.

AILEAN

How much longer you fishin'? Dark's comin' on.

JOSH

Some of us haven't been whacking on trout all afternoon. Give this nymph a try, but not too long.

AILEAN

Expect your mother will be waitin' dinner on us. She don't like the food gettin' cold.

Josh freezes momentarily, lips pursed.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
Dad, she's not here...

AILEAN
Huh? Course she is.

JOSH
No Dad...don't you remember? The
funeral...

Ailean stares blankly at Josh before retreating back into his trance.

AILEAN
(heavy sigh then almost
inaudibly)
I guess...not...

JOSH
We all miss her.

AILEAN
Where's...where's the other boy?

Josh finishes tying on the nymph before responding.

JOSH
Cody?

AILEAN
Yeah, Cody.

JOSH
Fishing down the river
somewhere. Haven't seen him in a
while.

AILEAN
(chuckles)
That boy is always on the
go. Real live wire.

JOSH
Yep.

A frown knits Ailean's brow, he stares blankly at Josh for a moment.

AILEAN
What...did you say your name is?

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Josh, Dad, my name is Josh.

AILEAN

(chuckles again)

Oh yeah...Josh, Josh, Josh.

Josh brusquely hooks the fly to the cork rod grip, cranks the reel handle until the fly line is tight beside the rod, leans it against the drift log, then sits beside Ailean on the log. After a moment he wraps an arm around his father's shoulders and hugs him briefly.

AILEAN

How many days do you think we've spent fishing?

JOSH

When? This summer?

AILEAN

No, from the beginning, from when you were little.

JOSH

Jeez...I don't know. Hundreds, I'd guess. Why do you ask?

AILEAN

Hoping I haven't used them all up.

Josh studies his father for a moment...

JOSH

What do you mean?

AILEAN

God doesn't subtract days fishing from our total...I'm hoping my account balance is still positive.

JOSH

I'd bet you're good for a while yet.

Gazing out across the river, they bask in the glow of each others company.

AILEAN

(reflective)

Just like this river, time keeps moving. Maybe the best we can hope for is no regret when we look back.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
I wouldn't change a thing if I
could turn time back.

JOSH
(affirming)
No regrets...
(pauses)
We've got a hill to climb. You
ready?

Ailean nods affirmatively. Both rise from the log, remove boots and waders, then put their boots back on. They roll their gear up and walk toward a rutted path leading to the bluff above and home. Ailean takes the lead...

AILEAN FORGING UP THE PATH

AILEAN
Where's...where's the other boy?

Josh doesn't answer immediately but finally does so in resignation.

JOSH
Cody. His name is Cody. Probably
already back home. If not, I'm
sure he'll find his way with no
problem.

Ahead of him in the deepening slate blue evening Josh hears Aileen speaking in between heavy breathes from the increasing exertion of climbing the steep path.

AILEAN
(softly)
Cody, Cody, Cody, Cody...

JOSH WATCHES AILEAN'S CHOICE OF STEPS ON THE PATH AHEAD

Josh's pulse drums a blood rush sound inside his ears.

JOSH(V.O.)
His steps are the ones I would've
chosen. I sometimes wonder if my
father's path will eventually be
mine...or Cody's. This I do know...
how much poorer our lives would be
and have been without the river,
four-count rhythms and fish that
rise.

5 EXT.PORCH,MCKINNIS RANCH-NIGHT

5

Seated alone on the porch steps, Josh enjoys a starry night sky. Cody joins him.

CODY
Pretty good day...

JOSH
It was.

CODY
He's getting worse.

JOSH
Yeah.

CODY
Been thinking...got a job
opportunity back here. Gonna look
into it.

JOSH
Yeah?

CODY
Yeah.

FINIS