

Four-Wheeler Fall

Description Essay By Nakita Schneider

The afternoon is sunny, but a winter chill loiters in the breezy air. Snow has come for the first time this year, and there are still limited dirt-tattered mounds lying around, yearning to melt in the warm, golden sun. The day has been boring and we don't have much to do. I'm to the point that anything but TV sounds pleasurable. Dad calls to me, "Let's go take a ride." To this, I imagine a pickup ride throughout the muddy country roads, most likely looking for deer or coyotes in the snow-sheltered corn stocks. Maybe he wants to take me on another "muddy road, driving lesson." Yuk! Dad leads me to the four-wheelers, snow still on the seats; and I begin to grin. Now I don't mind so much if we go looking for deer.

I turn on the key and the motor of my yellow-and-white four-wheeler cranks over. VROOM! Dad does the same on his red-and-black, and we're off! We drive into the country and go past the cemetery and then north for about four miles over snow-patterned roads, edged with slushy mud, for a fun, mud-flinging contingency. As my speed increases, the cool air pelts my face like baby bee stings. My eyes water and tears push to the sides of my bright, scarlet cheeks, towards my ears. My fingertips begin to burn from the lack of gloves, and my hair rapidly tangles in the sharp wind. Bitter, melting snow, and pungent, muddy roads fill my nose and lungs as I speed down the moist path, leaving a distinct trail behind me.

When we arrive back into town, my excitement diminishes. Just as I think we're heading back to the house, we make a quick left and there sits a muddy, stale, snow infested, and dangerous lookin' pond, just next to the highway and railroad tracks. Much of the snow has

already melted and become a small body of water, just deep enough for birds to clean their feathers or grab a drink.

At first, I don't know what to do. I drive through the clear water, and it soon becomes a foggy trail behind me. I begin with a few kitties here and there, quickly making the entire pond foggy brown, and I begin to wonder how far I can throw mud, as we were doing earlier on the mud-spattered country roads. Dad parks facing the highway and smiles as he watches the excitement replenish in my eyes. Spinning and sliding through the mud, nothing can stop me. As I arrive upon Dad's four-wheeler to my front left, I make an instant, sharp turn to the right and fling rooster tails almost six feet high, just missing Dad. Gripping the handle tightly, I rev the motor a little, cluing him that he's going to be pelted with mud, regardless.

As I make a large circle around the puddle, I stand on the footpads and increase my speed as I near him. Exhilaration runs through me and I'm determined. I get closer and closer and floor it, making a sharp right turn; but unfortunately, it isn't close enough. The mud lands just in front of him, as he smirks with pleasure and brash humor. I present a few more rounds, figure eight's, and kitties, until I feel able to redeem myself. Through the sloshing puddle I go, nearing the telephone pole. Creeping closer and closer until I am about six feet from Dad's four-wheeler, I then floor it and swiftly turn right. Only a few little specks land on the front of Dad's four-wheeler, but the feeling of accomplishment overwhelms me. Round and around again, and blood rushes faster and faster through my veins, and excitement replaces all other judgments. Uncaring of who watches as they pass by on the highway and shout out a friendly honk or two, I try and show off by whipping a cascade of mud in their direction.

I soon feel daring, and I increase my speed as I try to accomplish my objective. Veering away from the mud leads me to a dry spot, and I jerk forward and instantly come to a wicked

stop. A touch of panic runs through me, and I begin to feel slightly more cautious of the situation under the brown, cold, sappy mud. Then I instantly return to the mud-slinging mission but add some caution to my emotions. The next turn, an urgent left, as mud flies high out from under my deeply treaded tires, almost seems to be in slow motion. Finally achieved! Mud's first encounter with Dad. I am chilled with excitement and triumph! Dad is almost in shock when he feels the cool clumps reach his skin. He didn't think it would ever happen.

I proved him wrong and I'm more than willing to do it again. So, I'm on another mission. Pelting Dad with more chilled mud would be victorious, but maybe this time in the facial area, just for laughs and maybe a taste. Round and around I go, which seems to become a routine: figure eight to the right, sharp turn, fling some mud and do it again, and maybe a few intervening kitties or slides just to get off track.

I've got it down pat. I know exactly how sharp to turn, how fast to accelerate, and at what point I need to turn. Besides, I have been practicing this technique for almost an hour now. My grip on the handle tightens as I give Dad a "You're in for it" look, and I punch the throttle, which throws me back with an eager jolt. A few times around the drying out puddle to get my speed set and I'm ready to go. Only this time is different. I arrive upon my turning point as my excitement reaches its apex. Then, Dad pulls out his grey flip phone just in time to take a video. I just know this is going to be the best one yet, but unfortunately, I am completely wrong. My sharp right turn is made and my excitement completely vacates as my four-wheeler hits a worn, dry spot, deeper than the surface of the sopping mud. Tipping over on two wheels, I launch nearly six feet from my four-wheeler to my left. I land on my left side and roll over to my back, doing a full 360, and then some.

As I try to get up to find the four-wheeler, both flip flops are gone and I notice my mud-matted hair blocking my view. After flipping my hair back and smearing mud off my face, I realize that the four-wheeler is still on its side, struggling to stay running. It's beginning to let out a rumbling cloud of musty, grey smoke. I scurry to it to push it back on all fours, and I struggle as my bare feet glide through the mud. My four-wheeler lets out a few choppy grumbles and dies shortly afterwards, while Dad is still laughing about the whole incident, wondering if he got it all on video.

I'm more concerned about my quad still working. Feeling slightly ashamed, Dad is still giggling as he helps me lift the four-wheeler back to its normal stance. It is now that I recognize the gritty, grinding mud in my parched, pasty mouth. With a few cranks, the four-wheeler starts again, pressure is relieved, and I'm now interested in my new mud outfit and the video that we're both hoping he caught.

Turns out, Dad definitely got it on video and I'm more than content. As we both load up and return home, pictures are taken, and laughs and jokes are spilled. Our favorite terminology for this is "My Leap Frog." As I was being thrown off, it sort of looked like I was a frog. It's one of my favorite memories to share and I can say that, thanks to Dad, I have it on video as well.