

Write Your Life

A micro memoir writing project

Prompt: Talk about a regret.

Show Me

I couldn't follow the instructions, Tizi couldn't follow them. I don't know how Jeff could possibly have followed them.

We were in my parents' kitchen. My nephew was Cub Scout age. He had a length of rope three feet long in his hands. He wrapped it around his waist and my dad explained how to tie a square knot. Jeff tried to follow his directions. The rope fell to the floor. They tried it again, dad's words fumbling, not hitting the mark. Jeff caught rope before it fell and shrugged. I looked at Tizi, she looked at me, her eyes widening. He took the rope from Jeff, wrapped it around his own waist, and tied the knot. Like this, he said. It took Jeff a few more tries for him to get it, an operation that was simple, even elegant, that somehow resisted verbal description.

Sometime after that, my dad and I were standing on their screened-in porch. It was a breezy summer afternoon. Tizi and I were passing through town, on our way up North. I was telling him about work. The screens had Venetian blinds that hung floor to ceiling, each with a guyline that held it in place when the breeze freshened.

"See this?" he said. He pulled one end of one of the strings and untied the knot. "A slip knot."

He tied it again, holding the line with his left hand, the fingers on his right hand effortlessly rolling the other end, pulling it tight. He looked up at me, then slipped it.

I watched. But I had other things on my mind.

I wonder now, when and where did he learn to tie that knot? He was good with tools. He was good with electricity. I never learned everything he knew. I have my own screened in porch now, with Venetian blinds that hang floor to ceiling. Like him, I tie a guy line. My knot works, but it's not his knot. I wish I would have paid attention that day.