

Seeing my tractor framed by the first tendrils of light reaching from the rising sun was always a treat for me. I'd read an expression in a story a long time ago, and it came to mind every time I came upon my rig this way – 'like a proud be wounded lion'. I'd never actually seen him drive it, but my Grandpa had actually bought the tractor. My dad had taught me how to drive it, and once he died, it was just me and her together.

She was getting old and tired, there was no doubt. There were far more efficient tractors out there. Almost everything else out there had air conditioning, an air ride seat, unobstructed visibility through the cab windows...

*Heck, most even had auto-steer.*

A new tractor would be superior in every way, there was no question, but I wouldn't be the third generation of my family to drive that one. Grandpa wouldn't have sat in that seat, and I wouldn't have fallen asleep riding on that tractor with my dad.

Besides... In a newer tractor, I'd be just like everyone else.

*Not just everyone gets to turn the key on an old klunker like this.*

The place really hadn't changed much as far as I remembered, but it was impossible not to wonder about the things Grandpa had seen change during his time. He'd started farming with horses, and the space shuttle had flown before he died. He had seen the rocks and trees cleared off of this field by hand.

Being here, seeing these things and thinking these thoughts made me feel connected to them. It's always too soon to lose your dad, and I lost mine way too soon.

*Watching the red and yellow strands of sunlight stretch across the sky while the tractor warmed up brought tears to my eyes.*

New red or green paint might bring a quieter, more stress-free day, but there was no way it could help me to remember two men who had such an impact on my life.

*You couldn't take the old wreck out of my life with a stick of dynamite.*

