

Cristy Russell

Professor Wood

English 1301

February 10, 2012

Fishing for Memories

It was a Friday night around 11:30 pm on October the 5th, and I was finally driving home from a very long day at work. I had the radio on the oldies station singing along when I thought to myself, “Isn’t this ironic? My thirty-first birthday is just thirty minutes away.” For me this is just another year gone by, a few more pounds gained and more grey hair. Needless to say, I was not that excited about my birthday. I pulled into my driveway expecting to go in, take a shower, and curl up in bed with a book and rest, but when I walked in the door there was my husband, Chris, wearing my old kitchen apron. He had flour on his face and hands, as well as all over the counters. Sitting there on the counter was a triple layer chocolate cake with strawberries on top.

The house smelled of chocolate and cleaning supplies, and I knew Chris was trying to make this birthday special for me. The house was cleaned from top to bottom, including all those little places I usually only get to twice a year like the blinds and base boards. I walked into my bedroom to get out of my work clothes and the shoes that were starting to kill my feet. Sitting there on the bed was a present about the size of a pizza box, wrapped in hot pink wrapping paper with giant words in bold black writing that said happy birthday. I turned around to find my husband standing there with this cat-that-caught-the-canary look on his face. “Happy Birthday, Baby!” He exclaimed.

I was so excited. I love to get presents and couldn’t wait to tear that hot pink paper to shreds. I picked it up and tried to shake it: nothing. I turned it around and upside down trying to

figure out what it was. I looked over at the clock, it was 11:57. I wanted to open it right then but it wasn't my birthday yet. Chris noticed what I was doing and told me it was close enough to midnight that I could open it if I wanted to. I tore the paper off that box so quickly I was like a kid trying to get into a piece of candy. In my hands I held a soft, black, leather book with the word *memories* monogrammed on the cover in a beautiful, silver, italic writing. Above the word *memories* was a picture of my family from a day we had spent at the zoo framed in a little glass window. I felt tears start to shine in my eyes as I looked back up at Chris. I have wanted to make a memory album for a long time. I had saved pictures, movie stubs, little Chinese fortune cookie papers, concert tickets, and everything else you could expect a sentimental girl to save, to one day put in an album just like this one. I just never found the time to do it.

We curled up on the bed, propped up on the pillows and placed the book between us to look through together. The feel of the leather was so soft and warm, and when I turned the cover to reveal that first glossy page filled with memories the smell of new leather drifted through the room. As I turned the pages reminiscing about the past, there were so many different feelings that came to me. One minute I was laughing, and in the next I had tears running down my cheeks. Chris had filled every page with the things I had been saving. He had also included some of his own. There were pages dedicated to just me and him, pages of just the kids, and one dedicated to me and my grandmother who passed away just days before my birthday.

As we sat there my seven-year-old son, Daniel, walked into the room. He stumbled into my dresser that sits next to the door way, trying to rub the sleep out of his eyes. "Mama, can I lay in bed and look at the book too? I helped Daddy pick it out." I scooted over and Daniel climbed up in between us. We flipped through several pages stopping to point out how silly we looked in some of the pictures and telling stories about others, when all of a sudden Daniel

started giggling. He was pointing at a picture of me wearing a pink ball cap, black tank top, blue jeans cut off shorts, and flip flops. I was holding a fishing pole in my hands and on the end of the line was a tiny, little fish. I asked him if he wanted to hear a funny story about that day and he said yes, but before I started to tell him how I caught the fish, Chris looked over and said, "That's not a fish, that's a guppy." I just smiled and began to tell my story.

"We were on our way to the lake, to go fishing, driving in daddy's truck when I noticed just how dirty it was. The floors needed to be vacuumed, the windows needed to be washed and the dash had a layer of dust on it so thick you would think it hadn't been cleaned in months. I told your daddy that his truck was nasty.

"Daddy said, 'Ok, let's make a bet. If I catch the first fish, you have to wash and detail my truck and if you catch the first fish I'll wash and detail your car.'

"That's a deal,' I said.

"We got to the lake and I jumped out of the truck, grabbed my fishing pole and some worms and ran to the edge of the lake, not waiting for daddy at all. I wanted to be the one to get my car washed and knew I was going to have to be quick to beat your dad. I baited my hook and threw my line as far out as I could get it. Within minutes I felt something tug on my line; it was just a little tug and I thought the wind may have blown the line. Then I felt it again, jerked my fishing pole back, and started to reel in my prize. I jumped up and started dancing and yelling for daddy to come see. I pulled my fish up out of the water, and it was so small it would have fit in a gold fish bowl.

"Daddy started fussing and exclaimed, 'That's not a fish that's a guppy! It doesn't count!' I laughed.

"We made a bet, and you didn't say how big the fish had to be," I said.

“Daddy washed, waxed, and detailed my car that same day.”

After telling Daniel this story I took him upstairs, tucked him back into his bed and joined Chris back in our room. We sat there in our bed looking through the rest of my new memory album just reminiscing about things from the past and talking about some of the best times we have ever had together. It was in that moment lying in his arms that I realized turning thirty-one wasn't such a bad thing after all. I am lucky to have a family that cares so much about my happiness they would make me a birthday present to fill with all of the happy memories to come.