

Matthew

The day Matthew had been looking so forward to, yet secretly dreading, arrived all too soon; a beautiful Bass Strait morning sparkling with summer sunlight.

Matthew lay in his bed for a while, idly gazing up at the ceiling and listening to the familiar sounds all around him, sounds that he had never really taken much notice of before. Through his half-opened door he could hear the quiet steady tick of the kitchen clock and further away the throb of the generator. His father must be up already. Matthew wondered if his mother was awake after going to bed so late. She had been busy making jam with Shelley, trying to keep herself occupied, but all the time stealing glances at Matthew, fussing about whether he had everything ready for school and generally worrying over him. It was so unlike her to behave this way. Jack and Sidney didn't seem to care. They had been out all evening visiting friends. Matthew envied them. They had nothing to worry about.

Ready for bed, Shelley and Clinton had watched Matthew's cases being packed. Shelley wished that she could go too, and Clinton generously offered Matthew his battered fire truck.

'You can have it. I don't want it any more,' he told Matthew. Matthew was touched. It was Clinton's favourite toy. It lay where he had left it, on the floor by the wardrobe.

from *Night of the Mutton*
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