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Article 1

The Green Grandson

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Abstract

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The Green Grandson

THE LITTLE boy zig-zagged around the front lawn and rough-housed with the family dog. His forehead was damp. The hot August sun had sunk from sight, and the clouds in the western sky were a purplish-red. The boy stopped chasing the dog, reached down, and picked up an object. He bit into the green apricot, twisted up his mouth, and spat. He heaved the apricot with all his might, stared after it, put his hands on his hips, shook his head, and spat again.

The old man was sitting under the tree trying to escape the humidity caused by a late afternoon thunder storm. He chuckled to himself and kept puffing on his worn pipe. His eyes twinkled as he watched the boy come toward him.

“Grandpa — it’s a bad taste — why?”

“It’s not ready — not ready. It needs to be ripe — well, yellow — like those.” He pointed to some fallen apricots. “They’ve got to be ripe — everything does.”

“Why?” The boy stared up at his grandfather. The old man sat there awhile. Why didn’t his grandchildren have more sense? He chewed on his pipe, and hesitantly spoke.

“Well,” the man coughed, “it’s this way. They’re not ripe because they’re too young. Yes, that’s it. The green ones are just young ones — they’re just starting to grow. You know, Jimmy, like little kids before they’re big kids.”

“Oh.” The boy nodded his head that he understood, yet he cocked his head to one side and was motionless. He frowned. “Was I green, too?”

“No.” The old man shook his head and wondered why his daughter never told her son anything.

“Was Mommie green?”

“No, no. I meant green apricots, no young apricots, are like young children. Not the colors. Do you understand?” The old man laid his pipe in the crotch of the tree.

“Yes, but they don’t even look alike, Grandpa.”

“Climb up here, Jimmy,” the old man patted his knee, “and sit.”

The boy spread the old man’s legs, grabbed at a shoulder, and with his knee on the other’s thigh, swung up and around so that his back was against the old man’s chest. He snuggled up close. “What do you want now, Grandpa?”

“Nothing. Except — well — to explain about the big and little apricots. How’d you like that?”

The boy squirmed and didn’t answer. He glanced around and spied a lonely butterfly. Its haphazard progress across the lawn caught his attention. Suddenly it fluttered around an evergreen and was gone.

“What did you say, Grandpa?”

“I said people are like apricots. First they start small and grow into big ones. Weren’t you listening?”

“Yes, but why are they green?”

The old man breathed deeply and his face reddened. His daughter ought to teach the boy some discipline. He put his arms around the boy and rested his chin on the boy’s head. “Don’t you want to listen to my story?”

“Oh, yes, Grandpa. Tell me a story?”

“The one about the apricots, Jimmy?”

“What apricots?”

“Oh, never mind. What did you do today?”

The boy grinned, “I got spanked.”

“How’s this? Who spanked you?”

“Mommie.”

“Why?”

The boy giggled but didn’t answer. He pulled away from the old man’s sharp whiskers. They bit into the top of his head. He rubbed his head, turned and pouted at the old man. “That hurts me.”

The old man pouted back at him. They sat facing each other with protruding lower lips. Suddenly they both broke out in laughter.

“Now tell me why you got spanked.”

The boy pulled the old man's head down to whisper to him. The old man cocked his ear toward the boy.

"You know Mommie's pet cat?"

"Yes, the big white one."

"Well, you know the old place back of the barn?"

"The little shed?"

"Yes. I threw the cat down there!"

The old man tried to keep from laughing. This was serious and yet he couldn't help laughing. He hurriedly pulled out his blue and white kerchief and pretended to blow his nose.

"You laughing at me, Grandpa?"

"No, no sirree, just blowing my nose. What did you throw the cat down there for?"

"I wanted to see if it could get out."

"Did it?"

"No. Mommie had to reach down to get it."

"You shouldn't do things like that."

"That's what Mommie said."

The old man sat there. Maybe now his daughter would see that the boy needed some training. He rubbed the boy's blonde hair. "What else did you get into today?"

"Went swimming in the rain."

"You mean in the shower this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Where'd you swim?"

"In the ditch."

The old man pictured the sight of his grandson swimming alongside the road and the passing motorists. "Wasn't it muddy?"

"I took off my clothes."

The old man sighed. "Do you like visiting my farm?"

"No!"

"No?" Why not?"

"There aren't any other kids here."

"Oh — well — I can't help that. You like Grandma and me, don't you?"

"Yes."

The old man felt the boy went along with him on something, at least. He would never be able to understand his

grandchildren. He had been so careful to raise his own children strictly. They should take more time with their children. What a boy this grandchild was! His green apricots, the cat and the outhouse, the muddy ditches. The old man looked down and smiled at the back of the boy's head.

"How old are you now, Jimmy?"

Jimmy turned, raised four fingers, and said, "Six."

"You mean four?"

"Yes." The boy paused a minute, glanced up at the apricot tree, and climbed down from the old man's lap. He picked up a green apricot and then dropped it. "Grandpa — you know what?"

"No, what?"

"I wasn't green when I was little — I was pink — Mommie said so." The boy called to the dog and raced after it.

The old man shook his head.

—John J. VonKerens, *Hist., Soph.*



The Creative Process

A woman must be a poet
for she knows the process of birth.

Impact upon consciousness, the idea;
then forgotten, grown used to
as she grows used to her swelling body,
yet deeply aware of all influences.

When the time is right
the idea comes forth (a body and soul itself)
with soon-forgotten pain
and much love, so much love.

A woman must be a poet
for she knows the process of birth.

—Berta Moellering, *H. Ec., Sr.*