

JACOBS' STORM

I can't really remember very much conversation between us; just an old man and a little girl always together in quiet harmony. Maybe there was a language barrier between us, even though he was my own grandfather. His were the old ways and mine were the new. He had spoken the native tongue of our people, while I had learned the newer English. Of course, he spoke a little English to me, but I don't think he knew the language very well and felt uncomfortable using it. Still, we were as close as any two people can be.

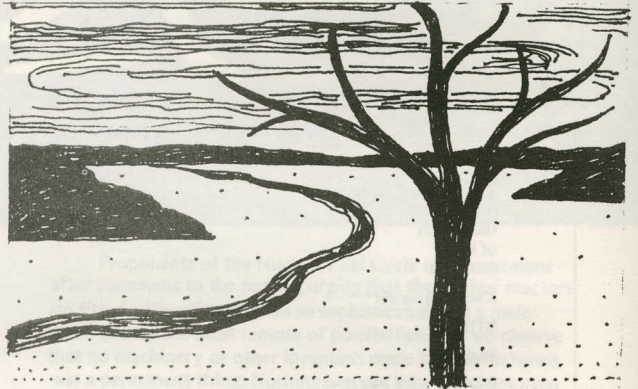
My earliest memories consist of the time when we lived with Grampa on his little farm. I can't even recall my parents or my brothers and sisters in this early period of my life; although I'm sure they must have been there too. I remember following him around the field when he plowed. He had no modern machinery, just an old work horse and a hand plow. I'd walk along behind him while he worked. Later when he finished, we'd walk the quarter mile to the old country store where Grampa would buy me an ice cream cone while he visited with the proprietor.

It seems like I was with him always; when he drew water from the nearby river carrying two pails on a shoulder yoke, when he cut the tall grass around his house with a scythe, and when he milked cows and gathered eggs. I never liked the smell of a barn filled with cows and chickens, but I always went with him.

Later, my father bought a house of his own and we moved away from Grampa's. Even then, we lived only about a mile from him, so there were frequent visits. Sometimes we would all drive over in the car and take Grampa out for a ride, usually to the harness races on Sunday afternoons. I don't remember much about the races, just that Grampa loved to watch them. Other times, I would walk to his house by myself. These were the times I loved best. There was always candy and peanuts in his dresser drawer where he hid them away from the other children. There were always cookies in the cupboard for all the grandchildren, but the dresser drawer was our secret.

There were still no real conversations between us, other than the usual question about the rest of the family. He would settle back on his bed with his pipe and I would sit at the table of his one-room house and read old newspapers by the dim light of the kerosene lantern, for Grampa never had electricity. It used to seem strange to me that he had a big box full of old newspapers and magazines because Grampa didn't read. Now I know they were for kindling fires in the big wood stove.

By this time, all his animals were gone and he used to let me play in the barn and in the little buildings he used for tools and wood. I never really knew what all those buildings were used for, but one was the perfect size for a playhouse. When I brought that fact to his attention, he promptly gave it to me. He cleaned it out and told me it was to be my playhouse for as long as I wanted it.



These were the happiest times of my childhood — the times spent with Grampa. Now he has gone, but his memory stays behind. I wish my own children could have met and known this great man I loved. I'm sure they would have felt the same way about him, and he about them. They have a Grampa too, and in their minds I'm certain he is just as great to them as mine was to me. But their grandfather is a product of modern times with all the modern conveniences, where mine was a link to an age lost forever. . . An age when men worked their land by day and were entertained by family closeness in the evening hours.

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