



Helicon West
& the USU Writing Center
Present

At Grandpa's Nursing Home

By: Shanan Ballam

Larkspur, wild daisies bloom, columbine
scratches its fingers through dirt, opens
dark-green palms fringed red-purple,
but it can't survive in early November.

I feel seeds burst in the dark,
my body wakes and mistakes this drape
of damp warmth for spring. I feel the tingle.
Do I want a tangle of hands in my hair,

a hot mouth to taste the pink buds of my nipples?
I think I crave apples, cherries, everything sweet-
wet, a cool breath of juice, flesh, I want
to remember the swell of earth, blossoms

opening pale eyes in drenched trees,
I want the brown gloss of a seed,
its bitter meat—how small in black soil, how
small the sleep of electric nerves

unraveling our limbs. Near the door,
tangy sap seeps like blood through the dust-white
skin of an aspen. There is a splash of white sun
on Ben Lomond peak. When I enter his room,

Grandpa's memory cracks open
to the beet farm, 80 years ago.
Between his skinny legs he grips the thick, velvet
flanks
of his horse, George, who glistens gold in the
long afternoon sun. Grandpa's stare
into my eyes is cornflower-blue.
He smiles and blinks, asks me to hold
his hand. I press my palms to his rough, cool skin,
gaze
through the window at the sear of blue sky,
plush stacks of clouds, naked trees
raking empty air.

Apples

By Brittny Goodsell Jones

I am a grandpa this time and I have broken a leg. A red wagon holds my seventh-grade weight so that my leg can rest. Leisa and Jenny are mothers, pulling the wagon, pretending to be exhausted from our short walk that started at Grandpa's garage.

"Do you think we'll ever make it to Zion?" asks Jenny

"Careful now, ohhhhhh my leg," I moan.

"Come on Bertha," Leisa says to Jenny. "We have to keep moving."

We all hate the name Bertha. *Fat women, jiggling arms, moles, eww.* Stefani always laughs when she hears "Bertha" during our play; her eyes squint up like a Chinese baby, so no light can come into the small slits left.

"Bertha, hahaha, that's a sick name," Stefani shouts.

I don't have a name, I am just known as Grandpa today. If anyone else has a name, it's bestowed on them. Sometimes we pick a beautiful name, like Lily or Pearl. But most pioneer names we dub each other with sound like cows or fat women.

"Bessie, how is Grandpa doing?" asks Jenny.

Chrissy wrinkles her nose and says, "ewww. I don't like that name."

"I'm fine," I croak, pretending to be parched. "But we need to get to water fast."

The five of us move north towards the end of Grandpa's apple orchard. We never walk against rows of trees, we always travel alongside them, following muddy tractor tracks through knee-high weeds. We walk like pioneers, burnt faces towards sun, pretending our cut off jeans are ripped petticoats.

The apple orchard is silently alive. Blossoms appear on branches while no one is looking, branches that ask us to stay and climb into their arms. Days are well spent here as sunlight sneaks towards the earth, ending pioneer adventures, asking us to come again.

We grow up among the apples.

Helicon West invites you to share our open mic nights every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, 7:00 PM at Citrus and Sage, 130 North 100 East, Logan, Utah. For more information contact Star Coulbrooke at scoulbrooke@english.usu.edu.

Sponsored by: The Helicon West Planning Committee and the USU Writing Center.
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