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Reading Article G2

Article #9: Picking Tomatoes

It isn't the first time I have picked tomatoes with Grandma. It is, however, the first time I realize why she requests my help.

For as long as I can remember, Grandma's plentiful tomato garden has been a sign of summer's end. Each September, just as the decreased heat of the sun hints at cooler days, Grandma requests my help in her tomato garden. She pats my head and assures me she cannot pick tomatoes without my youthful eyes and quick mind. She says we need to examine each tomato and agree on its readiness for picking. While Grandma's request for my help in the tomato garden is always the same, her desire for my help seems to

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It is as if she has been in the garden earlier that day, deciding which tomatoes will be picked. I often feel more of a hindrance than a help.

It is not until today that I realize it is my company she cannot do without.

There we are, lost in the tomato vines. As always, Grandma is scurrying from vine to vine, thanking me for my willingness to assist. I have to stand to spot the brim of Grandma's hat amongst the lush plants. I try to stay near her so I can hear her comments and directions.

Grandma's eyes are always discerning, and they are no different in the vegetable garden. From afar she spots what looks like a ripe tomato. As she walks toward the garden, she evaluates the tomato for a second time, but from a different angle. If it passes such inspection, I already know it will end up in the basket with the mound of others Grandma has carefully chosen. However, Grandma acts as if she needs a final look to be sure. She

calls me to her side, kneels beside the vine while enjoying the warmth of the fading sunlight on her face, and clutches the tomato in her hand. She turns each round, red ball toward the sunlight before disconnecting it from the vine with a half-hearted smile.

She then looks at me. I nod my head and smile. Grandma assumes I smile in agreement with her tomato selection. I know I smile, instead, at her.

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