

A STORY OF STARS

Just Like Grandpa Told It



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Every night when I go to bed I can see the stars through the window that is right near my bed. I'm sure you don't see anything special about that, but I do. My mom and I arranged my room so my bed was there because seeing the stars every night reminds me of my grandfather. He was a very special man and taught me many things. The most special lessons I learned from him was his story of the stars.

- Most people look up at the stars and don't give them much thought. They're just there on cloudless nights providing a little bit of light to our world or making just the right mood for couples out on a date. They think they are romantic or something. I don't understand that yet because I'm only twelve years old. I do understand how important stars are though and I don't think that anybody else in the whole world really knows the secret of the stars. My grandfather did though and he shared it with me. I'm not really sure if he ever told anybody else.



A STORY OF STARS

- When I was seven years old I visited my grandfather on his farm in the country. He was always busy from the time the sun came up in the morning until it went down at night. He would work in the fields and only stop long enough to eat something around noon. My grandmother would call him in by ringing a metal triangle thing that was really loud and that way grandpa would know that lunch was ready. When he got there we would all sit around this really big table and eat more food than you have probably ever seen in your life. I still remember the smell of everything cooking in the kitchen as it was being prepared on the old wood stove by my grandmother.
- The most special time of the day was when grandpa would come in from working in the field at night. He would always sit at his little desk and do some paperwork and then turn to me and say "Well little one, what did you learn today?" He always said that if you didn't learn something new every day then you weren't really alive. Most of the time I could answer him with something that I had learned or discovered but once I really couldn't think of anything for that day.



A STORY OF STARS

- He said, "well I'll tell you what, you ask me any question you can think of and if I can answer it I will. If I can't answer it then you will have a project for tomorrow. You must find the answer to your question and teach me what you learned."
- That sounded like a lot of fun so I thought real hard to ask a question he couldn't answer. Finally I said "Grandpa, where did the stars come from?" I just knew he wouldn't be able to answer that question. But, like always, he smiled and said "let's take a walk and discuss your question. I think you will really like my answer. In fact, you and I will be the only two people in the whole world that really know the truth about the stars."
- I was so excited I could hardly wait to get out the back porch door. I grabbed his hand and said, "come on grandpa, let's go!"



A STORY OF STARS

- Grandpa's hands were big and you would think that after all of the hard work he did on the farm that they would have been really hard. But they weren't. I remember my little hands fitting right up inside of his and always thought that they were the softest skin I had ever touched. We always walked hand-in-hand when we took walks together. Sometimes my dad would go along with us but I would always hold grandpa's hand. My dad would just smile and walk along with us. He already had his turn with grandpa while he was growing up so now he was sharing him with me.
- There was a little two-lane path in the back of the farmhouse that led out in two different directions. One direction would take you into a small woods where my dad would go hunting in the Fall. The other path took you out into a field that had only one big oak tree almost right in the middle of it. We took that path into the field to discuss stars.



A STORY OF STARS

- Grandpa didn't say much while we were walking. In fact all he said for the whole way into the field was "honey, just look up and see if you can count the stars."
- Have you ever tried to count the stars? If you live in a city there are too many lights shining so you can't count them but if you live in the country it is a little easier. I started counting but kept losing my count when I would have to step over a rock or a hole in the ground. It really was very dark out in the field. Finally I just gave up and said "I don't think you can count all of the stars grandpa." He smiled and said "you're right, it's not possible. But it used to be possible and that's part of the story I'm going to share with you."



A STORY OF STARS

- When we reached the big tree grandpa put down the blanket he had brought with him. He laid it out on the smoothest part of the ground he could find. It wasn't right next to the trunk of the tree because there were too many branches covering the sky from there. He put it almost out to the edge and said that from there we would be able to lay down and look up at the stars. We laid down on our backs and grandpa said "can you hear them?" I said "can I hear what, grandpa?" He said "the stars, can you hear them?" I had never heard of such a thing. How could you hear stars? They were just little lights in the sky and as far as I could tell they were so far away you could just barely see them, and if they made any noise at all you certainly wouldn't be able to hear them. When I told grandpa that I couldn't hear anything he said "you're right, you can't hear them now, but there was a time that you could and that's another part of my story."



A STORY OF STARS

- Grandpa's voice was very low. He was a singer in the church choir and I just loved to listen to him sing. When he spoke people always listened because not many people had a voice that was as low or sounded as smooth as his did.
- Before grandpa began telling me about the stars we just laid there listening to all of the sounds of the night. Crickets were chirping, there was a squirrel in the tree making a chattering noise and off in the distance an owl was hooting. Grandpa began to speak and every animal suddenly stopped making noise. I think they had heard him tell stories before and were looking forward to the next one as much as I was.



A STORY OF STARS

- "Little One," grandpa began, "stars are very special. They were created to do just one thing and to do it better than anything else. They are in the sky to give us light. But," he continued, "they do more than that. They let us dream of things in the night sky. They allow us to dream happy dreams and most of all they give us direction by always being there when we need them."
- By now I was totally confused and asked him to explain. "Okay he said. Let's talk about the light they provide. Sometime during every month the moon is hardly visible. But the stars, when there are no clouds to block our view, are always there shining brightly just as they have since they were created. The moon reflects the light of the sun but the stars make their own light. They don't depend on the sun's light to shine brightly in the sky like the moon and the other planets do. That's why sailors could always find their way home when they were in the middle of the ocean and didn't have any way to know which way they were sailing. They could always depend on the stars to guide them.



A STORY OF STARS

- Stars have been the subject of many poems. Even simple poems like the one you've often said when you see the first falling star in the evening and make a wish." I agreed that I said that one often because I had so many things that I wanted to wish for. After all, I was only seven years old. "Even I sometimes look up when the day is done and the light is fading in the sky and look for the very first star so I can make a wish. Usually it is about being able to live a long and happy life so I can share times like this with you and my family." I smiled and looked up at him as he continued.
- "Everyone should dream of what the future holds for them. What would the world be like if nobody dreamed of being the person that discovered something special that would change life for the better for everyone on earth? I think life would be pretty boring if we didn't dream, don't you?" I nodded my head that I agreed but didn't want to say anything just in case he would stop telling me about the stars.



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