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 Remembering founders John Rogers, 1940-2012, and Dennis Michaud, 1943-2008



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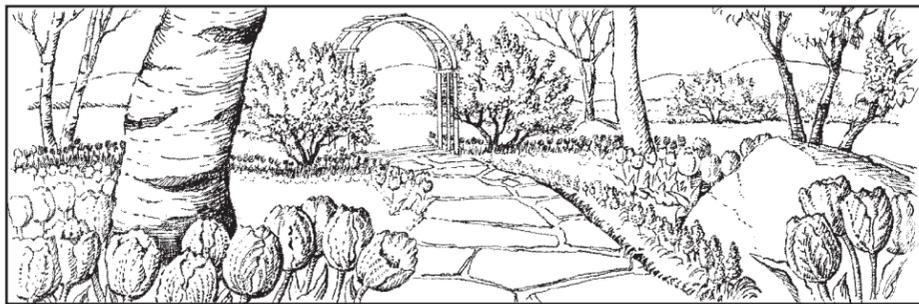
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Betty's Bakery

Melba Miloney (a.k.a. "Peaches") was crouched eight feet off the ground on one of the undamaged branches of her beloved Yellow Transparent apple tree. A freak downdraft in last night's thunderstorm had shattered a branch of the old tree. Peaches was performing a necessary amputation with her bow saw when her cell phone rang in the pocket of her work jeans.

The ring tone at least warned her that it was a friend calling - she'd programmed in the 80's anthem "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun!" especially for her neighbor, Yanci Dubois. Peaches and Yanci had been friends since high school and now lived just a mile or so apart.

Peaches laid her saw down across her lap and read the text message from Yanci.

"Let's meet at Betty's at 2; she's just made a huge 'Afternoon Delite!'"

Peaches tugged off her landscaper's gloves and texted back, "Great timing! C U @ 2!" She returned the phone to her pocket and finished the task at hand. The clean-cut branch landed with a thud near the base of the tree. Peaches dropped her saw onto the ground, then climbed down carefully. After dragging the debris over to the brush pile, she climbed into her beloved gray GMC pickup and drove the four miles over to Betty's Bakery.

Yanci was just parking her fluorescent green Mitsubishi when Peaches rolled up in the truck. They walked onto the bakery's porch together, Peaches brushing the fresh sawdust off her thighs while Yanci held the door for her.

"Looks like you were having fun," Yanci observed.

"Just a little post-storm yard clean-up. That old tree should be ok; the damage wasn't too bad."

"Good," Yanci said. "I know that tree means a lot to you. You and your dad picked it out together at the nursery years ago after you got your horticulture degree, right?"

"Yes, good memory!" Peaches said. "I've probably told you this before, but that was my all-time favorite graduation gift. Dad gave me a gift certificate for \$500.00 and told me to spend it on trees and plants that would add value to my new house and give me something back in the long run. Those apples have made some great mid-summer pies over the years!"

"I hear that!" Betty yelled from the kitchen. "Your organic apples have been wonderful for my business. That's why your servings of today's 'Afternoon Delite' are on the house, ladies. The Transparent apples you shared are long gone now, but I know that neither of you ever turn down my specialty dessert."

With a ceremonial flourish, Betty slid two plates of said specialty across the counter to the two friends. Thick, moist chocolate cake with a thin layer of raspberry sauce in the middle and topped with half an inch of chocolate ganache frosting, this dessert usually sold out within a couple of hours. This cake elicited reactions similar to that in the famous diner scene in "When Harry Met Sally." It was so scrumptious, in fact, that Betty added this naughty disclaimer to the cake's description in her menu: "No need to shave your legs to enjoy this Afternoon Delite!"

As they carried their plates to a booth beside an open window, Yanci exclaimed, "I don't know what I did to deserve this freebie, Betty, but thank you very much!"

"Aw, don't mention it," Betty waved away the thanks. "You're both good customers and you clean up after yourselves, unlike *some* people." At this she gave a mock glare at the good-looking guy who was taking a seat at the counter.

"Now, Betty, what're you blaming me for *today*?" Webster Cartwright tried in vain to appear the picture of innocence. "I'm a man, so I must be wrong, is that it?"

"Of course!" all three women agreed, smirking at him.

"Ok, I'm totally outnumbered here," Webster noted. "You two in the peanut gallery," he pointed at Peaches and Yanci, "just eat your cake!"

Since their mouths were already full, the peanut gallery was unable to provide an immediate retort. Instead, two pairs of eyes rolled dramatically - each speaking volumes.

"I saw that," Webster shook his head mournfully. "A man can't even come



Thanksgiving Walk

My dog and I are on our daily walk, holding on to the last days of fall as hints of winter let us know that soon our walks will be curtailed by snow. Keltie suddenly pulls harder on his leash, yanking me forward around a bend in the road where I am stopped dead by the sight of a lone tree with yet every leaf still on its branch—peak at its peak. The magnificent gush of crimson freezes me, even with the dog pulling me onward.

I cannot, dare not, move for fear the moment will disappear. The blood-red tree shimmering in the morning sunlight is a glowing beacon, a feast for the eyes so beautiful, so touching, that I need to soak it in, to have and hold as a piece (the peace) of this autumn season. How this one tree managed to keep its leaves this late in the season is a miracle, along with the gift of sight to see it. I whisper a prayer of thanksgiving for miracles and move gently forward, driven to pull just one leaf, one perfect leaf for remembrance. As I reach for a leaf, the gravestones surrounding the tree rear up, protecting their sacred ground.

It occurs to me that this is exactly where I want to be buried, under and within this tangled nest of roots, branches and magnificent leaves; to have my ashes scattered amid the tangle to nurture the fertility of this perfect place.

The sound of a car engine suddenly invades my privacy and I hear the engine stop and then a car door slam. I turn and see a woman pulling a pumpkin, now two pumpkins from her trunk. Kneeling she places the pumpkins on a grave and ever so gently clears surrounding debris and arranges the pumpkins just so. As she arranges them I realize that I am the intruder, not she.

I stare at the power of simplicity. The simplest of things - a magnificent tree, the placement of pumpkins on a grave - take on the sacredness of eternity, even as the dog moves me on.

Jane Bailey

Litchfield, Connecticut