

# The Apples

by Kyle Kimberlin



Here we have a man on his front porch, sitting and watching the traffic, the sunset ochre in the haze of an Indian Summer afternoon. He holds a pair of clippers that belonged to his father. A beautiful day, warm enough to drive the sparrows to the birdbath in the morning and under the hedges by lunch. He drove into town and drank iced tea in the colonnade, wetting his fingers in the condensation on the glass, to turn the pages of the latest Time.

His father left him all his tools: channel-locks and hammers, socket sets, files and screwdrivers, power drills, tree saws, sewer snakes, leaf rakes and boxes of nails. Everything a man might need. Now he holds the shears, working them on the cooling air, as on the thinnest branches of his trees. And wonders how he came to own one pair of black shoes for everyday, and one black pair for Sunday. And somewhere in a closet are a pair for hiking, which he never does.

Time goes slowly in the afternoon, then suddenly the day is gone. It doesn't linger at the door, with promises to visit soon or call about the holidays. You do not hear its tires wheezing down the driveway and pausing at the street. So when he puts the clippers away in the dim garage, and hangs his picking ladder on the wall beside his truck, the sun is gone.

It's time to eat, but nothing sounds good. Nothing in the cupboard but boredom. The day was just too wonderful; who can think about food? Well, maybe a salad. Spinach tossed with olives and balsamic vinaigrette. Or these Gala apples, just picked and washed and drying on a towel. He takes an apple, polishes its surface on his shirt, and goes out.

There is just a last lip of purple light beyond the stand of sycamores, and then the town and the slow canal. He closes his eyes and listens as a semi shifts down and makes for the hill beyond the tired, dusty trees. He takes a bite and sighs. So many memories in apples.

Like the time they drove to a farm in the mountains, where the fruit was just an hour off the tree. He rode in the back of the pickup with his brother and the crates of apples, and he can still see his own hand reaching out for one that ran like watermelon down his chin. His mother made pies.

He remembers the apples were red, not green, but gave him a stomach ache and later made him dream he'd lost his dog; that he found the front door open and running saw her wagging her tail and running down the steps; that his family stood in the yard frowning into the distance and could not help; that running in that hopeless, sodden way of dreams he saw her turn that corner that he knew was grief, pause to around look for him, and disappear.

So many memories in apples.

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