

Laughter and Apple Trees - Sarah Craft
2nd Place
Moorefield Middle School, Hardy County
Grades 5-6

My name is Roxi. I grew up in Washington State. When you think of the state of Washington you think of a northern state. When I think of Washington I think of three things; rain, rain, and more rain. I hadn't been home in four years because I was away at college in England. On the Olympic Peninsula is a town called Forks. My family lived outside of this town since the town was founded. My family owns a large estate with a few horses and an apple orchard, but none of the family is ever there. Mr. Harvey, the caretaker of the estate, is the only resident.

As I drove up the slope to the house I remembered my childhood here. I parked in the driveway and walked up the steps to open the door. As I entered the house, I remembered sliding down the tall marble banister, and twirling in front of the mirrors in the foyer. I could still smell my mother's apple pie baking at Christmas with all the family joking and laughing together. I was twelve and my sister Lizzy was a newborn when an outbreak of scarlet fever hit Washington. The fever took most of my family including my parents. After the fever I went into a deep depression. Needless to say all the well wishers and white carnations didn't help me forget my loss. My Aunt Bee took Lizzy to live with her and cousin Charlie in Arizona. Aunt Bee sent me to a private school in New Hampshire. When I was sixteen I found that the pain of my loss dwindled to dull ache in my heart as I remembered all the good times with my family. I remembered Dad's laugh, loud and booming. I remembered my mother's perfume sweet and musky. Now as I walked the hallway of my childhood home I realized that Lizzy now must

grieve over her own loss. My reasoning for coming here after so many years was because Aunt Bee, who had taken care of Lizzy since a baby, had died. We were burying her that evening.

Those who remained of our family were there; my cousin Charlie, Uncle Fred and Lizzy. We followed the priest to the family cemetery behind the house. While we were waiting for the hearse my uncle told me with tears in his eyes that Aunt Bee had died quietly in her sleep. Our family was wealthy and could afford the home care that Bee had needed, but her frail body couldn't take it anymore.

The hearse came and the priest said some prayers and talked about her life and death. Lizzy had not spoken a word. As I looked at Lizzy I saw the same vacant face I had had during all those years of lonely depression. I know that I had never really been there for my little sister. But that would change. I planned for us to live together now. I walked over to her and took her hand. She followed me when I pulled her towards the labyrinth made of apple trees.

"I know that right now all you can see of Aunt Bee is her lying in bed being sick. But you have to think of all the happy times together and all that she has taught you," I told her as we walked through the little drizzle. "Well, I remember when we would come here in the summer and walk down this path whenever we were feeling blue," she said.

"Yeah, she and Mom had a saying. They said that a little laughter and an apple tree could cure any case of the blues," I said.

Right after I said this, the rain stopped and a beam of light shown on the path and an apple hanging on a tree overhead dropped down and hit me on the head. Lizzy and I toppled over on each other with laughter. As I looked at Lizzy smile, I knew that Mom and Aunt Bee were looking after us. "Well, I guess it's true," said Lizzy as we walked back to the house still giggling and smiling.

