The Hero

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The Hero

by
Sharilynn Battaglia

Alone, he stands
Waiting
Watching for the signal
It comes
He looks to the left...
To the right...
Lost in his own thoughts
He must concentrate
Dark eyes searching
Searching what?
His opponent?...His soul?
They are one and the same
They wait for him
He makes his choice
Winds up
Releases...
The mound stands empty
The last batter struck out
A figure approaches in the fading light
The pitcher is older now
But his memory lives on
And here--
Alone on the mound again
He relives that day from his past
When he was 18
And a hero.

Spring

by
Gail Wyse

"Growing up on the farm it was easy to enjoy spring. Everything came back to life in a way that hit you in the face everywhere you looked. The roads were no longer mushy brown. The tree limbs weren't naked. The sky donned blue shades instead of gray and the clouds seemed to dance on light breezes. Even the air smelled like it was brand new--cool and crisp like ice cubes in fresh water.

"But I think I liked the earth the best. You could almost feel it vibrating with the rhythm of life below its surface after Jack Frost headed north. If you listened hard enough you could almost hear those little seedlings stretching for the sun just below the surface. To city folk it may look like a barren patch of ground, but country folk know there's a whole universe coming to life under that hard dull surface.

"Seems to me that a lot of things are like that. They look pretty plain or dull, if you just glance at them. But if you know how to look, or how to listen, there's no telling what kind of treasures you'll find inside, underneath or just 'round the bend."

It's funny how spring brings thoughts of possibilities. If Grandpa had lived long enough for me to remember him, I imagine he would have said all those things as he rocked on his city porch one evening. Grandma always said he liked farming the best, but they sure had a hard time making a living at it. Still, her eyes glistened when she told me stories of country living. It wasn't hard to guess she missed it and that Grandpa would have missed it too, if he hadn't died after a hard day's work in the field when I was only three.

To me, a blank piece of paper is something like that farm field. On the surface it looks just like a barren stretch of nothingness. But somehow, just below the surface, a billion possible images--shapes, sounds, textures, smells, colors--are waiting to be dug up by anyone who cares to do so. On this sheet of paper I can walk through fields, dig dirt and haul rocks with Grandpa. I can hear his wonderful Grandpa voice lay tons of Grandpa wisdom on my ears.

Days are like bland pages too. Each holds all the material I need to fashion whatever kind of life I want. Each a page in the story of my real world. The problem with days is they take too long to finish and also you can't go back and change or edit once it's done. You have to keep building on what you wrote the day before, but you can let the story change direction as often as you like depending on what you write each day. That part's nice. I like that. Some people say if you think long and hard enough you can actually change the physical aspects of your real world. The "power of positive thinking," they call it. As hard as I try I can't make the snow go away in December by telling myself it's really 90 degrees outside. So, for me anyway, with days I'm stuck with what nature hands out.

With pages you can erase or throw away whatever you don't like. You can start all