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Endangers the Corn

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Endangers the Corn

Gretchen Anderson

Lilly grew up on a farm. She lived on that farm for twenty-five years.
Then she and her husband started their own.
For seventy-eight years she lived on a farm.
But not anymore.

Her daughter's place couldn't be called a farm.
A few vegetable plots and a pig do not a farm make, she told herself.
She didn't care what her daughter said. This was no farm.

Lilly sighed as she gazed blankly out the window.
Her daughter had a bit of a black thumb, in her opinion,
And those corn stalks looked terrible.
Sighing, she marched out the front door.

Corn has to be protected from overgrowth, you see.
When it reaches a height of three feet, some of the leaves must be
plucked
In order to ensure it grows to the proper height, and to reduce insect
damage.
As she'd done hundreds of times before, Lilly plucked the leaves.

Shriiiiip, shriiiiip, shriiiiip. Lilly reveled in the satisfying sound of ripping
leaves.
Her daddy taught her how to care for the vegetables when she was
seven.
It seemed like just yesterday she saw her daddy.

Grasping ahold of another stalk, Lilly let go to examine her hands.
Hands that used to be tough and calloused from labor had grown soft.
Small pearls of blood adorned her fingers and palms.
Mustn't stop now or we'll go hungry, Daddy used to chirp.
Ignoring the pain, Lilly continued on a new stalk of corn.

Rosaline drove slowly up the winding driveway to her house,
Happy with herself for finding a sweater that Mama might actually wear.
Parking before the garage, she gaped at the sight beside her:

An old woman in a white nightgown plucking the petals off her rose bushes.

Barefoot in the dirt and shrouded in pink and white should be a beautiful sight.

Mama was confused again, and this time the roses paid the price.

Slowly approaching her mother, Rosaline laid a hand on the frail old shoulder.

“Oh Rosie! You startled me. I was just taking care of your corn patch here.”

“Thank you, Mama.”

“You mustn't let it get so overgrown, sweetie. Flea-beetles and mice will feast on it. You must pluck the leaves regularly; otherwise, it endangers the corn, you see.”