

The Little Grape

Many years ago, I think it was about 300, no perhaps it was 500...*oh what's the difference it's just a story...*, there was a vineyard in the valley below a hill in Italy. You could see the Royal Palace on the hill top from the vineyard. Every year some people from the village would grow grapes in the vineyard and make the finest wines in the entire valley. Even the grapes themselves were proud to have grown in such a wonderful place. In fact, it was a great honor for them to be pressed into the finest wine. For the wine from this vineyard was served at the King's table.

There was a little grape who lived high up on a vine in that very same vineyard. He used to look up at the palace and dream...*(every one has dreams you know)*... about being made into a fine wine. As he was growing all season long, he was getting ready for the day when the poor boys from the village would come and pick him. Each day, the sun shone brightly on the leaves and often it rained, and all the grapes were growing bigger and bigger. The little grape did have some trouble, however, as he was often in the shade of a leaf or pushed back by the larger grapes.

When the time for the harvest came, the poor boys from the village came with baskets to pick the grapes, which they did playfully throughout the entire day. The little grape kept expecting to be picked next as he watched all of the other grapes being put into the baskets by the boys. But at the end of the day as all the baskets were loaded on the wagon, the little grape remained high up on the vine.

"If I had a voice," the little grape said to himself "I would have called to one of the boys and he would have picked me." But, alas, the grape had no mouth to speak...*which is exactly why he spoke to himself*...and he just watched sadly as the wagon rolled slowly away with the poor boys holding on to the sides or running behind it.

As it was the fall of the year, the Sun was lower on the horizon, but the little grape was very sad now and didn't care even if the Sun went away. As the days and weeks went on the leaves fell from the vine and blew around on the ground which had become hard and dry. But no people came back to the vineyard and the little grape was sad. But he never stopped looking up at the Palace which now he could see more clearly because he was alone.

Each day, the Sun got lower and lower and the rains stopped coming and the little grape began to feel his skin wrinkle. "I am dying." He said to himself...*which is exactly why he spoke to*...Sorry I already said that. Anyway, he was very sad that he would never get to become a fine wine on the Kings table. But each day the Sun continued to shine. "Why do I need the Sun now," he thought. I am already dying and by now all the rest of the grapes are happy in the oak barrels becoming fine wine.

After the fall season was over, the winter set in and the little grape continued to shrivel and dry up as the cold winds blew and the Sun was hardly there at all anymore, which was ok with the little grape. As he looked around, he could see ...*everything can see, you see...* that he was the only grape who had not been picked. But that didn't make him sadder, as you and I might think, in fact he was happy that all his friends were off becoming fine wines for the Kings table.

Then one day, it began to get warmer as winter said goodbye, and the Sun started to come back. The little grape, who was quite shriveled by now looked up at the Palace and saw a boy walking towards the vineyard. "The poor boys are coming back to get me." he thought for just a moment, but quickly put that thought out of his mind. But as the boy came closer, it became obvious he wasn't a poor boy at all. This boy was dressed in fine clothes with gold, yes real gold trimmings on his most beautiful wine colored cloak. He had on a hat the same color as the cloak with the nicest feather you ever saw sticking right out of it.

It was the Prince and as he approached the vine where the little grape was, he wondered what the wine on the King's table even tasted like. He was too young to drink the King's wine, don't you see. But, for some reason, the Prince saw the little grape high up on the vine and turning over a basket that had been left by the poor boys at harvest time, he carefully stepped onto it and reached for the little grape. "This is a fine raisin from my father's vineyard" ...*which was soon to be his vineyard...*, the Prince said as he popped the little shriveled grape into his mouth.

"No, I think that this is the finest raisin that has ever grown in my father's vineyard." The little grape heard the Prince say while he was being chewed up...*everything can hear don't you know...* and was being swallowed by the Prince, and the little grape was at last very happy, no, actually he was very proud! Or was it happy and proud, yes that's it...The Little Grape was happy in the end and, oh yes, he felt just a bit proud!

...everyone has feelings, don't you see...

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