

toward us in a dirty yellow 1970s Chevy Silverado pickup. He turned off the engine and got out. Within minutes the community surrounded him. They were shaking his hand, telling him how glad they were that he had come.

My granma came up to me and asked why I didn't join the others. I told her it was no big deal. She shrugged and said, "Suit yourself." Then she rushed to the old man and greeted him.

My granma was polite to everyone. I thought all that polite stuff was garbage. But don't misunderstand. I love my granma. She is my best friend. Actually, my only friend. Most of the kids my age are a bunch of jerks as far as I'm concerned. With Granma, I can be myself. Mostly the two of us just hang out. She doesn't fuss about what I watch on TV. Occasionally, though, she will ask why I'm watching a show that isn't, in her opinion, at all interesting. I explain that it's a great story. Granma smiles like she knows something, but she doesn't say a word. We have an understanding. If I don't ask, she won't tell. So I don't ask. I figure she'll let me in on what she knows if it's important. Truth is, Granma is smart, even if she acts like she isn't. An example: A couple of days ago we went to the grocery store. There was a new cashier at the checkout stand who had a real attitude. She rolled her eyes when Granma started putting the stuff we got on the counter. Then in a snotty tone of voice she announced the total: twelve dollars and twenty-seven cents. Granma smiled politely and then went into super slo-mo. She took her

### *Summer Wind*

LEE FRANCIS

It was a hot summer day when the Storyteller came to our village. All I wanted to do was stay inside and watch TV or chill to some tunes on my stereo. My granma had something else in mind; I had to help her prepare for the Storyteller's big event that night. Because it was my granma, I did what she wanted without complaining. I set up the chairs and card tables that I had borrowed from everyone in the village. Then I gathered wood for the campfire.

The old people, adults, and little kids were busy getting the campfire ready for the Storyteller's performance. Apparently he was going to do his thing standing under the old oak tree. Everyone was excited and acted as if his visit were a spectacular event or a holiday. I couldn't care less.

I had just finished my chores when this old guy drove

wallet from her handbag. That took at least two minutes. Then she opened her wallet and started counting out the change. I knew she had a twenty-dollar bill. I didn't smirk. My granma was, as she would say, helping someone learn. I think what she was helping the cashier learn was to not mess with her.

First Granma counted out ten dollars in quarters. That took a couple of minutes because she accidentally dropped a few on the floor. Granma and I picked them up and she started counting all over again. Then she stopped and looked at the cashier, who was really pissed. Granma asked the cashier to repeat the total. I wanted to burst out laughing, but I kept a straight face. Granma was really getting her money's worth. She continued counting out the change. Very slowly. Finally, after about eight minutes or so, she handed the change to the cashier, who by now was so mad that she dropped the coins. Quarters went flying all over the counter. I almost lost it. I could tell my granma was having a hard time not laughing too.

When the cashier had all the change in hand, Granma said that maybe she should count it again, with a polite smile. "Just to make sure it's all there." The cashier shook her head and said that it wouldn't be necessary. She handed Granma the receipt as I picked up the plastic bag filled with groceries. Then Granma told the cashier to have a nice day. Man, oh man, was that cashier furious. I heard her say real soft, "Damn Injuns." I pretended to not hear her. She reminded me of the jerks at school.

After we left the grocery store, I burst out laughing.

Granma joined me with a chuckle all her own. Then she got real serious. Glancing at me, she said that what she had done was not very nice. I looked solemn and agreed, and then we both started laughing again.

When I told Granma what the cashier had said, she looked real sad. She said the cashier was a pathetic soul and explained that people who do name-calling don't have any self-esteem. Like I said, when something is important, Granma tells me about it.

I guess you could say we're buddies. She can put someone in his place without batting an eye. Even me. That's why I didn't say anything about helping her prepare for the Storyteller's visit. I knew if I copped an attitude, we would get into it . . . and I would lose.

Finally we were all sitting around the old oak tree eating potluck. Everyone was talking softly. Now and again I could hear the voice of the Storyteller. He was speaking to people at each of the card tables. When he sat down at a table that I had set up just for him, it was sunset.

The wind started up. Granma called it summer wind. For her it was a sign of good things to come. I wasn't so sure. I mean, how could a wind, whether it was in the summer or winter, bring good things? Or even bad? When I asked Granma, she just shrugged and smiled knowingly.

I looked at everyone sitting by the oak tree. The summer wind cooled the air down quickly. One of the old men of the village got up and started the campfire. Granma and I were sitting pretty close to it. When the fire

reached a quiet glow, the Storyteller stood up from the card table, where he had been eating his meal. He began to tell a story.

"And so. It is said among the People, in the long ago time, all of creation, seen and unseen, first existed as a tightly compacted single ball. After a long time had passed, Spider managed to crawl outside the ball.

"Outside the ball of creation there were no stars or light of any kind. There was only an incredibly small pinpoint of light coming from within the ball. It was the place from which Spider had crawled out. But Spider could not crawl back in. Spider became very lonely. Then Spider had an idea. What if it were possible to make a web? After I make a web, thought Spider, I must think of a way to loosen the tight ball. When I have loosened it, I will place its parts upon my web.

"Spider began the long and difficult task of making a web from the pinprick of light. Spider first took a strand of light and drew a line from east to west. Then Spider took another strand of light and drew a line from north to south.

"Little by little, Spider created a beautiful web of light.

"The work to make the web of light had made Spider very hungry. Spider chewed off a very tiny piece of the ball. Spider decided to take the small piece and put it on the web of light. The web of light began to grow a little brighter, and Spider began to feel refreshed.

"Spider continued to chew off bite after tiny bite.

Now the pinprick had grown large enough for Spider to look inside the ball.

"After a while, the pinprick became large enough for Spider to return inside. But the web had grown far beyond what Spider had originally woven. Just as Spider was getting ready to crawl inside the ball, white matter flew out and traveled to the farthest point north on the web. Blue matter traveled to the farthest point west. Something yellow went to the farthest point south. And something red went to the farthest point east.

"There was a loud rumbling. The deafening noise scared Spider, who scurried to the center of the web. Spider closed his eyes and curled up all eight legs. After a while, Spider's eyes opened. For as far as could be seen, millions of dots of light were captured in Spider's ever-expanding web.

"Spider decided to get closer to one of the bright dots of light. It was a slightly egg-shaped, blue-green ball that looked like Spider's home place.

"Then Spider took some of the light and spun a single line to it.

"Just as Spider let go and landed on the surface of the ball, millions of dots of light flowed from the great web. As they danced off the end of the strand, they transformed into plants and rocks and all kinds of animals. After a while, there were fewer and fewer dots of light.

"Much later, two tiny dots danced off the strand. They were the last. One transformed into a woman and the other transformed into a man. They were the first People

on the land. First Woman and First Man looked at Spider and smiled. Then First Woman turned to First Man and said, 'Let us call this place Earth.'

"Spider liked that name and told First Woman and First Man that it was a good name. It was such a good name that Spider decided to stay and help the People.

"And so, it is said among the People, this is how the universe came to be and why Spider will be important to the People, always."

When the Storyteller finished his tale, no one said a word. I looked at Granma. She nodded and asked if I understood the story. The Storyteller and I looked at each other. He smiled like my granma. I closed my eyes. I was trying to decide what the truths were in the story. I opened my eyes, concentrating on the meaning buried in the Storyteller's words.

There was Spider. Granma had told me that Spider was not called he or she. Just Spider.

I couldn't help grinning when I figured out the first truth. Patience. Spider was patient and spent a lot of time thinking. Then there was the concept of biting off more than you could chew. Granma was always harping on that. Spider took a risk by climbing out of the ball. Risk-taking was another truth.

Maybe stories are so powerful because they can have so many meanings and contain so many truths.

The summer wind sent fire sparks up into the night sky, like fireflies dancing. I looked at Granma. She was using telepathy with me. She asked again if I understood

the story, and I answered, "I think I do. At least the important things." The summer wind had indeed brought something very good. Somehow I knew that someday I, too, would be a Storyteller . . . to celebrate all of creation, seen and unseen.