



## SHORTS

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### Growing Up

There comes a time in a person's life when childhood fantasies end and realization begins. Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny turn out to be Mom and Dad, and heroes fade away. I don't know if this event is remembered by most people, but thinking back about my grandfather, I know when it happened to me.

It was an ordinary summer's day on my grandparents' farm. Once again my grandfather had told me one of his crazy stories and had convinced me of its truth. After searching the woods for hours, I finally gave up, realizing that I probably wouldn't find the Indians Grandpa swore lived there. Tired and discouraged, I went to confront Grandpa.

"We didn't find anything," I said. "How come all your stories never come true?"

"Well, sometimes you have to *make* them come true," he answered. "Why, I once had a friend named Huck Finn who made his own adventures."

He proceeded to tell me about his good buddy Huck, who floated down the Mississippi on a raft. I sat listening to him and believing every word he said. When he finished the story, I went outside and thought about what he had said. Maybe I could make my own adventures, too!

I went to the backyard. In an old tree, my older sister and cousins had been building a fort. Nails, a hammer, and old boards lay scattered on the ground. Everything I needed for my own raft!

About two hours and three smashed fingers later, I had built my masterpiece: a small, crooked, and slightly warped-looking raft. I dragged it over to the pond along with a branch from the tree to use as an oar. I waded into the water until it reached my knees. So far so good—the raft was floating and it seemed unimportant that I hadn't yet learned to swim. I pushed farther until the water was waist high,

knowing that this was where the pond dropped off.

Many times I had been told not to go any farther, and normally I wouldn't, but today I had this raft. With a big push, I shoved it out and jumped on top of it with the branch. I was fine for a total of four seconds; then I realized I was slowly sinking. Panicking, I tried to use the branch to paddle back in, but only managed to push myself farther out. Knowing that I would probably drown, I did what any other seven-year-old would do in a similar situation: I screamed.

From the reeds by the edge of the pond came my sister and cousins, laughing hysterically. They came in and easily pulled me out of the water. I sat on the edge of the pond and listened to them tell me how intelligent I was. My raft slowly sank to the muddy bottom, never to resurface. And with it went my belief in my grandpa and the pedestal I had placed him on. Although I never stopped loving him, something changed in our relationship that day.

Looking back now, I can see that the change wasn't in my grandfather, but in me. I was growing up.

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