



A Son of Their Own  
(Flash Fiction, 319 Words)  
By Chris W. Vasques

"The ground is too stony," he said. "Nothing else will grow here."

He reached down slowly, pants hanging slant on his old hips. His fingers, bony, struggled to twist a raspberry from its branch. He popped it in his mouth, eyes wide like the small fruit added hours to his life.

Grampy's small patch of berries was my earliest memory of nature. In a suburban New England yard, just before breakfast, we carried small blue bowls out to the patch of soil. It had blueberries too. Together we picked the biggest ones we could find.

"Leave the small ones for another day," he'd say.

And when the blue bowls were full, we brought them inside where Nana would rinse them before they tumbled wet over our cornflakes.

Gramp grew grapes too, but they were not for eating. They were wine grapes. His trellis leaned from the shed to the chain-link fence. The canopy created a magical tunnel of adventure vines. My imagination made meaning and mystery. He said not to climb the trellis, but I climbed it anyway. He said not to eat the grapes, but I ate them anyway. They tasted terrible. The dark purple and greyish green flesh burst bitter in my mouth, full of tiny hard seeds. They reminded me of the plastic decorations my mother laid out at Thanksgiving. I couldn't eat those either, but I did chew on a heck of a lot of them. Why would anyone grow something that couldn't be eaten? I had never tasted wine but imagined how terrible it must be.

Best to stick to cornflakes and ripe berries. Best to stain my smile only with fruits advised by my grandparents. They had two daughters, no sons, and never had to deal with a mischievous little boy. Milk splashing. Spoons clinking. Cats strolling. Sun shining rays on the curly hair of a boy, like the son they never had.