

Avocados, Potatoes, and Tomatoes

An Essay on Sudden Change

A True Story by Hyrum Hendrickson

Once upon a time there lived a boy named Hyrum. This boy was named after the ancient king, Hiram of Tyre, who helped build the mighty temple of Solomon. This boy, however, was no king. He lived a quiet and peaceful life deep in the foothills of California, near the land where James Marshall first discovered gold. He often explored ancient groves divided by narrow streams. He wandered empty trails where once prospectors traveled. Only a few minutes' stroll from his home was an olive orchard. Hyrum visited the orchard often. He loved the smell of moss and fallen leaves. He would sit and think for hours on end. Sometimes, he would eat olives. Not from the trees, of course. He would bring olives from home. He savored the salty flavor while watching the sun set over a purple horizon. While Hyrum enjoyed olives, there were a few common food items which he would refuse to eat; avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes.

Hyrum was an obstinate child. He claimed that he did not like the taste of these three foods. Hyrum's parents, however, were not so sure. He was a contrarian, and would often disagree simply for the sake of disagreement. Hyrum and his parents contended against each other on all manner of issues. It was a grand struggle. He refused to participate in family activities. He was unkind to his siblings. He would refuse to help around the house. Hyrum's parents didn't necessarily care about which food he did or didn't eat, but in their mind, the three foods became emblematic of their struggles against their son. They believed that they would be able to help him learn kindness and empathy if they could only convince him to eat avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes.

Hyrum's parents employed every manner of device to whittle away at Hyrum's distaste. They would often secretly cook a meal with one of the three forbidden foods, Hyrum would enjoy the meal. The parents would gloat and tell Hyrum what he had eaten. Hyrum was crafty however, and would then explain to his parents that while he had said he enjoyed dinner, he was just being nice and did not really like it. Hyrum and his parents sparred for years. After time, the flame of hope began to dwindle. They wondered if their son would ever grow up. They began to wonder if he would ever be willing to eat avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes.

Yet, all was not lost. As Hyrum began his first year of middle school, his grandfather came to visit. The sun was obscured by gray clouds drizzling warm rain. The smell of clean wet earth drifted in through the door as grandpa walked in. He smiled; everyone hugged and laughed. For a moment, the family's troubles seemed distant. Grandpa sat down and began chatting with the parents. All kids know that grownups can talk for hours and hours without breaking. Hyrum and his siblings kids, lacking endurance, left one by one. However, Hyrum did not go far. He was able to hear them talking from the other room. He didn't listen much at first, nothing really interested him. However, before too long, Hyrum heard his own name. "Don't worry, Hyrum will grow. Soon, he will learn to enjoy avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes."

Hyrum was stumped. He had always trusted his grandfather. He spent the whole night wondering about what his grandfather said. Grandpa seemed so earnest. Hyrum continued resisting every attempt to introduce him to such foods, but it felt different. Hyrum often wondered, "Why would grandpa say that?" Weeks later, Hyrum sat at school, heart racing. His teacher had just told him that he had won a class competition. Hyrum learned that because he read more books during break than any of his classmates, he was invited to a special lunch meeting in the library. The principal was throwing a party for all the students who won the competition. Hyrum sat at his desk, waiting for lunchtime. Each minute seemed like an hour. His teacher had given him a sheet of math homework, but he was too jumpy to read it. He watched the clock like a hawk, each minute ticking by. Finally, the bell rang! Excited, Hyrum jumped up. He hurried over to the library. He was so excited that for the first time in weeks, he forgot about what his grandfather had said. He forgot all about avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes.

As he walked in, Hyrum was ecstatic. He sat down next to Thomas, a friend from another class. They began chatting. Both were so excited about the chance to win the competition. They talked about which books they read over the summer. They shared favorite moments and gave each other recommendations. As chatter began to die down, the principal got up to speak. He said, "well done kids! We are proud of you all for your hard work. In order to celebrate, we ordered lunch from a restaurant in town for all of you!" The library erupted in a cheer which would have certainly upset the librarian had she been there. Hyrum and Thomas high fived! They began theorizing which restaurant they would get food from. Two teachers came in, bringing baskets of food. Hyrum's breath caught in his throat. He was handed a plate of corn chips, with a

great big scoop of guacamole. At that moment, all his worries about his grandfather came flooding back into his mind. His mind filled with thoughts of avocados, potatoes, and tomatoes.

Hyrum was dismayed. He looked around, frantic but trying to hide it. Thomas began eating. He was so worried about what his friends would think if he didn't eat the food. Everyone around was clearly enjoying it. He wanted to reject the food, but felt he couldn't do it so publicly. Hyrum thought and thought and thought. Suddenly, he found a solution. He realized that if he were careful, he wouldn't need to tell his parents about eating the food here. He reached for a chip, bracing himself, scooped up a miniscule bit of guacamole, and put it in his mouth. He chewed quickly and swallowed before he could even taste it. Hyrum paused. "It wasn't that bad" he thought. He grabbed a second chip, and put it in his mouth. He chewed slowly this time. He grabbed a third. Then a fourth. As he ate, Hyrum realized he was enjoying it. The guacamole was salty, smooth, and savory. Hyrum took bite after bite, and kept eating. Soon, the teachers were back, this time with tacos. Hyrum was given a taco, filled with chicken, cheese, and tomatoes. He was nervous, but he boldly grabbed one and took a bite. The crisp tortilla crunched in his mouth. The fresh tomatoes complimented the warm chicken. As the assembly drew to a close, Hyrum began to think. He realized that perhaps he wouldn't need to hide this experience from his parents. He enjoyed avocados and tomatoes. He thought he would probably enjoy potatoes as well. As he walked home, he made a resolution, "I will tell mom I want to eat avocados, tomatoes, and potatoes."

Hyrum now eats these foods rather often. He remembers this story because he learned something about himself that day. He realized that he never really cared about how the food tasted. He realized that he had refused to eat them simply because he wanted to fight with his parents. He realized that he was only hurting himself by being unwilling to work with his parents. He realized that life is better if you work together with your family. On that day Hyrum decided that he wanted to change. Hyrum and his family did not live happily ever after, they had many more challenges and struggles. But, they were a team now. And when things did get hard, they always remembered the story of the avocados, tomatoes, and potatoes.

The End