

*THE HARD
HANDS OF A
KIND MAN*

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Part I: The Example

The boy watches as the man tinkers and toiles, as he wrench's and ratchets away on the tractor

The hours pass and the day grows old, the man finally stands and nods his head, having made some unspoken decision

He tells the boy to grab two horses from the stables, the new ways have failed so they will do things the old way

The boy has never hand plowed a field, he is little more than an assistant, bumbling and waiting to be told

The man secures the last strap, and calls on to the horses "git up!"

The day grows older and sun beats down, its hot, hotter than riding the tractor

Not once did the man curse, not once did he falter, not once did he complain about the work to be done

The boy sees the man, sees how resolute he is in these actions, so he is quiet, he stays quiet and works alongside the man

The last row is run, and the last dregs of sun slip from sky

Finally, the man turns to the boy and say, thank you son, your welcome pa

Part II: The Beanstalk

The boy has grown, not quite a man, and not still a boy

He is somewhere in between, between the lines of work and fun, between youthful joy and hard learning

He is bigger now, but not quite filled out; he looks more like a beanstalk than anything else

Regardless, he is stronger, and able to do more than when he was just a boy

He hauls whole bales of hay to pasture, he turns out mares for grazing, and he can now reach the pedals of the old worn-out tractor

Despite his efforts, he can never quite keep up with or out work his father

He admires him and wants to be like him, striving to learn and do more

His father doesn't give him much praise, but that's fine

A simple nod, good job boy is all he needs, as even those are hard come to by

The boy is growing, and he is growing fast

Part III: The Teenager

The boy and his father are arguing again, out of love, the father holds back words that he knows will sting

The boy is older now and head strong, he does not hold back his words

Hormones run rampant in the boy's body, growing muscle and height, but robbing him of his self-restraint and reason

The boy leaves in a fit of rage, tearing up the clover field as he does, he is gone for two days

Upon his return, he is ashamed, ashamed to see his father having done three days of chores while the boy was away

Ashamed that he drank and chased girls while his father worked to provide

No words are spoken as they sit down for breakfast, no words need be said

The boy tends to the field he destroyed and joins his father in the stables soon after

The father hands the boy his old straw hat and some water, reminding him its hot

The only words that are spoken for the entire day

For a man with hands hard as leather, his heart is soft and kind, and forgives like no other

Part IV: The College Graduate

He is smiling, more than the young man can ever remember seeing his father smile

The boy finds his cap and makes his way through the crowd of fellow students and friends

He hugs his son and tells him he's proud of him, he has to look up now at his son

He stands a full two inches above his father, a combination from the years of work beating down his father's back and the young man's youth

Today is a happy day for the father, but not for the son

The young man is worried, worried since the passing of his mother, and him now leaving his father

He is met with stern words and reassurance

Both have worked too hard; both have given too much to get here

The father tells the son to go, go have fun with his friends, and to call should he need it

That night, he stays awake, in the house, quiet and alone

He simply sits, and waits by the phone

Just in case a boy, now a man, needs his father

Part V: The Boy is Now a Man

It has been years since he's left home, and he's met a girl

She reminds him of his mother, kind and sweet, but with a cheeky side that's hard to beat

The lessons from the farm stick fresh in his mind, and drives him to provide

Their home is small, but it's enough

They go to visit his father even now and then and the son calls all the time

The years have worn on the father, now an old man, who refuses to retire

He turns away the thought of hiring a hand, insisting that this is family land, and it will be worked by family hands

The son and his wife have news for the old man, a grandson is on the way

The old man is happy, but his pride is what shines through

He feels content and accomplished, knowing that the family name will continue

The old man will soon go from pa to pa-pa

Part VI: The Passing

He had never noticed just how hard and callused his father's hands were

It had been some time since he took his last breath, but he sat there, for what seemed an eternity, refusing to let go

He held his hand and just stared at the man who raised him, never looking away

It looked as though he were sleeping, as if at any moment he would grumble and roll out of bed

After some time, he wife as did his two young sons came into the room and finally said goodbye

There was sadness, but not remorse

The old man was happy with the life he had lived, he was ready to move on and meet his maker

Everything was left to his son, including the farm, the one thing he held most dear

It was up to him if he should keep it or sell, the choice was his

After the funeral, he looks at his family and wonders what life they should the live

Part VII: Family

Dead, again, he removed the side cowl and combed over the engine, looking for the source of the problem

He latched onto a piece of metal, but soon let go realizing it was still hot

He just chuckled and looked at his hands, his calluses had grown, so it didn't really hurt

Years had passed since he decided to keep the farm, and the boy had surely proven to be his father's son

This could not be fixed here; it would have to be taken into town

He turns and calls to his boys the next field over

He tells them the new ways have failed; they will have to do things the old ways

They are told to grab two horses from the stable, and tell mother it will be a long night

The day grows old and hours drag on, just a father and his sons building calluses