

Sun Town Secret
By
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It had been a lazy morning for doctor Jason Haswell. One he fully intended to relax and sleep in. A football game was coming on plus he had the day off, a rare treat for the young doctor. That was one of the main reasons Jason chose to become a general practitioner, he wanted regular hours and a life.

Suddenly Jason's phone rang interrupting his attempt to relax. His first thought was to ignore the call. Yet, it could be from his hospital recalling him back. Being a medical resident meant he was practically on call even when he was not.

Grabbing his cell phone, he brought it close and blearily peered at the caller Id. He saw it was not the hospital calling him. However, he did recognize it was an old friend from college.

Pressing the accept button, "Hello?"

"Jason, it's Greg? Did I wake you?"

"No, not really?"

"Ah ok. I hear ya passed your certification board, congratulations!"

"Yea, a week ago," Jason sleepily responded sitting up in bed.

"Then when're you done at Marcy General?"

"Two weeks."

"Wow, have you thought about where you're going next? I mean, I remember that you told me, um, that you wanted to become a general practitioner?"

"I still do. I was thinking about heading back home and joining an existing practice."

"Oh, did you get any offers?"

"A few," Jason casually responded waking up more.

"Then I'm glad I called. How set are you on going back to Ohio," Greg cagily asked.

"I figured, since I'm from that area, it would be a good place to settle down," simply answered Jason.

"But if a more immediate job opened up, you'd jump at it?"

"Maybe, depending on what it is. What're you proposing?"

"Well my company insures a lot of people down south. In many places, we run a PPO with a single general practitioner

providing all of a rural town's medical needs. You know, a country doctor tending to roughly five hundred people," Greg carefully explained.

"Interesting."

"I'd hope you might say that. Well, there's a place down in Mississippi who just lost their only doctor. It's a small isolated spot where the nearest hospital is at least an hour and a half away. You leaving Marcy lines up well with their needs. You'd get over eighty thousand a year plus free room."

"But that's way down there though," whistled Jason.

"I know, but the money's good, the area is beautiful, living there is rather cheap, and you'd be doing what you love? Plus, didn't you once tell me you had no problem living outside Ohio?"

"True. So what'd I have to do?"

"Well you'd only have a month to wrap everything up and move down south. You would need to obtain a Mississippi state license, which we can help you with. Then pass an interview with mayor Brad Myers. If he likes you then you're in."

"If not then I drove down there for nothing," Jason sardonically retorted.

"Oh he won't. You're the type of guy he likes. You know how to keep a secret and you're warm and friendly."

"For eighty thousand and a free place to live, I could do that," Jason conceded.

"Excellent! I'll get the ball rolling on my end. We'll have you take your Mississippi medical license at the end of this week. Then have it rushed through so when you head down there, you'll be ready to start."

"Thanks Greg, it sounds interesting," Jason spoke as the two moved onto personal matters. When they hung up, Jason found himself quite eager to move south. The idea of being a country doctor was something he always had in mind from the very beginning.

A little less than a month later found Jason driving south. His relatively new Jeep Wrangler Unlimited was packed full of meager his belongings. While the truck's radio blared some local country music station.

The deeper into the south he went, the hotter it got. Once past Jacksonville, he noticed the already rural state became much more open and wild. He passed miles of farm fields, many of which were full of some sort of low leafy plants, others of corn, and a few which appeared to be cotton.

After an hour and half south of Jacksonville, his GPS alerted him to get off the highway he drove on at the next exit. He found it was a rather out of the way spot with a single family owned gas station. The small building was nestled in-between tall old mossy oak trees and a few magnolias. Briefly, he stopped there to refuel and grabbed something to drink.

Ten minutes later found Jason working his way west. As he did so, he again found himself surrounded by miles of farm fields. Each were divided by thin groves of wild trees. Some of the farms he passed looked run down and widely spaced out.

The few villages he drove through were quite small and nestled in wild groves. Most were simply slow speed zones with maybe a stop light. However, his GPS showed he was still an hour away from his final destination, Perking Mississippi.

Later on, Jason entered the Perking town limits. A sign happily announced the town, that its school had won a state championship back in the early nineties, and had a local population of four hundred. Yet despite entering the town limits, he still found himself surrounded by miles of wide open fields.

Then he came to the town proper. Like the other small sleepy villages Jason passed through, Perking was mostly centered around a single road with a stop light. The street, aptly named Main Street, was surrounded by semi-painted one and two story wooden buildings. He saw a church, grocery store, a post office, hardware store, grange, an open sunny park, and a few other small businesses. The only building not made of wood was the town hall which was a small one story brick building.

Jason also saw a good portion of the town moving about. He glimpsed children playing, elderly folks relaxing on benches, and various others going about their days. To him it looked like a regular rural town.

As he was instructed, Jason pulled his truck into a spot before the town hall. Getting out, he briefly stretched his limbs and pondered a few elderly men sitting on a bench under an overhang. Each was watching and trying to figure out who he was

and what he wanted. Jason assumed they did not see a lot of outsiders due to Perking's remoteness. Finally, he checked to make sure his clothes looked ok.

Ready to see the mayor, Jason stepped up upon the rough wooden deck before the hall. Crossing to the main entrance, he pulled open the screen door and went inside. There he found himself within a counter top dominated foyer with a few ceiling fans for cooling. A slightly overweight middle aged woman sat behind the counter doing paperwork. Her dress was rather plain and her short haircut seemed simple.

Looking up from her work, the woman pondered Jason with her hazel eyes. "May I help you sir," she tiredly asked with a slightly reedy voice. Her speech had the typical deep south accent.

"Yes, I'm doctor Haswell and I've got an appointment with mayor Myers," Jason politely responded.

"Hmm... let me see hun," she replied peering down. By the sounds the woman made, she was flipping through a note book. "Oh yes, yes I have ya right here." Then the woman peered behind her and yelled, "Brad your two o'clock's here!"

"Alright," replied a man from an office behind the woman. Within moments an older man came out, his hair and beard were salt and pepper while his clothes were plane and farmer like. Seeing Jason standing there, a bright smile crossed his face. "Doctor Haswell, you got here in good time. I hope ya journey was safe," the man greeted coming over to shake Jason's hand.

"Yes, yes it was good. Made good time despite a major traffic accident around Memphis." Jason casually replied as the mayor let the doctor behind the counter. The pair worked their way back to Brad's office.

Going inside, Jason could see it had a single window looking out at the grange next door. Its walls were made of old cheap fake wood siding that had numerous cork and white boards tacked on it. Many of which had either stuff written on them or papers and posters.

Brad gestured for Jason to sit down in a wooden chair opposite his desk. After sitting the two briefly traded pleasantries then got down to business. "I got the report that you passed the licensing board."

"Yep, I took it a few weeks ago and it was rushed through."

"I'm glad. We've been without a doctor for a short bit. Maggie, our nurse, has been trying her best to care for us, but we really need you."

"Well, that's why I'm here."

"Very good. We're a simple farming community. Most of our residents grow soy beans with some rice and corn. We've got our own school, volunteer fire department, police, and hospital. That'll be what you'd be running."

"Hospital?"

"Well it's a house that the Dempsey family donated to the village back in the forties. It was slightly enlarged and now can hold sixteen patients. There's even an operating room down in the basement," boasted Brad.

"Interesting. Where would I live?"

"On the property There's a single story ranch house which will be yours."

"Ah I see."

"Now, I know I asked you some stuff over the phone, but I need to make sure of a few things. First, are you a god fearing man?"

"Yes, I've attended church regularly?"

"Which denomination?"

"Lutheran."

"Oh, well can you join our Baptist church?"

"I can."

"Splendid! Now on to my other pressing issue. We're a very close group of people. Admittedly, many are a bit intolerant of outsiders. With you, I'd expect them to be unsure in the beginning but will get used to you over time. Another thing is that we believe in keeping what happens here quiet?"

"Ok..."

"Sooner or later people will be telling you things and showing you stuff outside your medical duties. Will you be able to keep what you see and hear quiet," pressed Brad in a serious tone.

"I can and will."

"Great," exclaimed Brad getting up from behind his desk. "Then you're hired. Let me show you the hospital and introduce you to Maggie. She'll get you up to speed with the hospital, your house, and the town in general. But let me be the first to welcome you to Perking Mississippi, your new home!"

"Thank you very much," graciously responded Jason shaking the man's hand. With that they left the office and crossed through the hall then out to Jason's Jeep. They chose to leave his truck there and walk to the hospital. Along the way, the mayor related to Jason about the town and buildings he passed. Interspersed, were tidbits of gossip and a few comments about various resident's medical issues.

Finally, the pair arrived before the hospital which sat a block off main street. The building looked to have once been a two story manor house at one point. The kind with porches on every main floor that nearly encircled the entire place.

The mayor explained how the Dempsey family had been plantation owners going all the way back before the civil war, or as he called it, the war of northern aggression. However, the devastation caused by the north coupled with reconstruction had hurt the family a lot. Over time, they lost much of their holdings and soon their last descendant, Mary Dempsey, had no children to deed the house to. Instead, she chose to will it to Perking with the purpose of making it a local hospital.

Once inside, Jason met Maggie who insisted in calling him doc or doctor. Afterword, she showed him around the place. Then upon seeing his office, she took him across the yard to his own house. It was a typical single story 1950's ranch house.

For the first couple weeks, life began to settle down for Jason. At first it took him a while to get used to running the hospital, even if it was a small one. Yet, he started seeing a rhythm to things. Not only within the building but the town as well.

The locals were a bit shy around him the first week. He had gotten a lot of stares and silent looks. Then on the first Sunday, Reverend Miller introduced him to his parishioners. After that, people started coming to see him. The cases he saw afterword ran the gamut from age related illnesses to children getting hurt.

Yet as time passed, he began to notice a few strange things beyond the town's standoffishness. One thing was that it seemed everyone was more energetic during the day. While on the one hand, a farming community worked in the sunlight. However, once

night came out, people just seemed far more sluggish than expected. Like they needed large amounts of caffeine just to stay awake in the dark.

The other oddity he noticed were the children. While on the one hand, they did act like regular kids. However, he noticed they were a bit more secretive than normal kids should be. Plus, he thought the first few he saw were adopted as they looked noticeably different from their parents. On top of that, when he listened to their breathing, he saw how their belly buttons appeared strange. They were more bland dimples than normal belly buttons. However, when he peered at their records he found that nothing strange was noted by the previous doctor. Each file reported those children were born at the hospital with no complications with their parents clearly listed.

On a lazy Friday afternoon, Jason was relaxing on the hospital's front porch with a glass of lemonade. He had wanted something stronger but Perking was a dry village. Thus, he sat there casually watching people walk by. He had not learned everyone by their names yet, but he figured he would over time.

"Why hello there," casually greeted a twenty something year old woman. She had on a pair sneakers, shorts, and a white shirt with a Mississippi state university logo on it. Her long light brown hair blew about in the afternoon summer breeze.

"Um, hello," uncertainly responded Jason. "I don't think we've met?"

"Oh, no. Not yet doctor Haswell. I'm Melinda Myers." The woman responded holding out a delicate hand for him to shake.

"Nice to meet you. Myers? Are you related to the mayor?"

"I'm his niece."

Abruptly Jason noticed she was standing out in the sunlight. "Oh hey, where's my manners, why don't you come have a seat in the shade?"

"Why thank you, I think I will." Melinda accepted as she walked up onto the porch and sat down on a rocking chair. Briefly she was silent as she pondered the quiet scene before the hospital.

"Want some lemonade," he offered gesturing to the pitcher.

"Sure," she agreed and grabbed an empty glass and poured herself some. "Now gossip says you're from Ohio?"

"Yep, born and raised."

"Was that where you got your medical degree?"

"Nope, Harvard."

That caused Melinda to whistle in amazement, "Wow you went to one of them ivy league schools huh?"

"Yep."

"What was it like up there and how was the snow?"

"Not much different then Ohio. Cold and busy."

"I never understood why northerners were in such a hurry?"

"It's due to the climate. Grow up around snow and soon you'll want to get your work done quickly so you can get in where it's warm."

"Ah, ok doctor," Melinda softly spoke while taking a sip.

"Jason, you can call me Jason," he replied with a warm smile.

"Alright Jason it is."

"Now what about you? What do you do in our fine fair village?"

That caused Melinda to giggle a bit. "Me? Oh, I'm a waitress over in Maggie's Diner."

"Fascinating, I've got to start dropping by there," Jason wistfully spoke.

"You should, a lot of people hang out there from time to time. Many wonder why you've not poked your head in there yet?"

"Well I will now that people want me to. I've just been up to my neck trying to get this place back in order," He spoke gesturing behind him.

"Why what was wrong?"

"Oh a bunch of new equipment came in before I was hired that I had to learn. Including a few required new paperwork to monitor them. Then there's learning everyone's files."

"Wow, that seems like a lot?"

"At the beginning it was but I've got a handle on it now."

"Oh hey, were you planning on going to the solstice dance tonight?"

"When was that?"

"It starts around four pm and goes to sundown. You're more than welcome to come," she graciously offered.

"Sure I'd be delighted. Where will it be?"

"In the park in front of the grange."

"Very nice."

Briefly Melinda checked her watch. Seeing the time, "Oh hey it's about to start. Want to walk over there together?"

"Sure let me finish this," he spoke gulping down the rest of his lemonade. Briefly he put the dishes inside before coming back out. From there, the two wandered over to the grange.

Upon arriving, Jason could see many people had already shown up. Each graciously greeted their new doctor. After a moment, the band started playing a country waltz.

For a short bit Jason and Melinda danced together. Yet soon he enjoyed a few other partners. Finally, he hung out with the mayor. Brad introduced him to more people before the reverend joined them.

Then as Melinda mentioned, when the sun began to set, the dance ended. Everyone happily left and drove or walked home. By the time Jason left it was nearly dark out and he was the only one on the street.

The next day found Jason following Melinda's advice. He figured he had a few hours before he saw his first patient. Thus, he figured it was a good time to go down to Maggie's Diner and grab some breakfast.

Stepping inside the semi slim long space, Jason glanced a typical diner. Along one wall was a long counter, while by the windows were numerous booths. Most were full of farmers and other workers grabbing breakfast.

As he crossed the space, various people greeted him. Many, he noticed, seemed to be dressed in lighter clothing than before. A lot of the farmers wore shorts while the women wore short skirts. However, Jason shrugged that off as a result of the oncoming hot summer day.

Finding a spot along the counter he sat down beside one such farmer. The two briefly gossiped about the weather and the crops. Then Melinda came over and greeted Jason. Briefly, they conversed before she took his order of coffee, eggs, and toast.

As she walked away to fill his order, Jason saw that under her apron, she wore light clothing. Then he noticed something else about her. Her otherwise soft tanned skin seemed to have a hint of green to it. Even the man sitting beside him also seemed to be lightly green. Yet Jason wondered if that was caused by the lights or the dark green counter.

Either way, the doctor figured it must have been his imagination playing with him. When Melinda came back with his food, he briefly gossiped with her before she had to go back to work. Then before he could eat his breakfast, another farmer came over to ask Jason a question. In the end, the doctor told the farmer to come by the hospital in an hour and he would examine the man.

Paying his tab, Jason wished Melinda a good day then walked back to the hospital. There he appraised Maggie over what the farmer had told him and went into his office to peer at the man's files. Briefly he noticed that even the older woman seemed to have lightly green skin. Plus she, like the others, wore more summer clothing than normal.

Throughout the day Jason saw numerous patients. Each one, young and old, all seemed to display that light pigmentation. Yet all mentioned they were just fine. Along the way, he ran a few tests on some and each came back normal.

As with the day before, Melinda came over to hang out with Jason after her shift. He had been standing on the porch contemplating what he wanted to do for the evening. When he saw her, Jason waved and casually crossed over to greet her.

"You came to see me again," playfully inquired Jason.

"I gotta say doc, you're an interesting man. I don't think I've ever met someone from up north before you?"

"This town doesn't see that many outsiders?"

"Nope, we're funny like that."

Jason gestured for her to join him on the steps while he sat down and she gratefully accepted. Instead of finding shade, she seemed to be looking for sunshine. Soon she had her legs out in the late afternoon sun. Jason noticed that like before, her skin was still softly green.

"Um, can I ask you a question," Jason tactfully broached.

That caused her to lightly giggle, "Sure?"

"But, ah, why is your skin slightly green?"

That caused her to giggle even more. "Silly, because it just is?"

"Well, I mean, why is everyone's skin in town turning green," pressed Jason.

Melinda just shrugged, "Because it's that time of year I guess?"

"What do you mean?"

Briefly Melinda peered about for a moment making sure no one was looking. Then she leaned in to Jason. "It starts happening right after the summer solstice."

"What starts happening," he whispered back.

"You'll see soon enough. Trust me, it's a good thing," she informed him before giving Jason a kiss on the nose. Afterward she got up, wished him a good night, and headed home before the sun set. Jason watched her leave still just as perplexed as before.

Two weeks later found things had gotten even stranger within Perking. Before long, Jason was the only person in the town who had regular tan skin. Everyone else, young and old, all had dark green skin.

First, he went and asked the mayor about it. With a cryptic smile, Brad mentioned that was something that everyone in town, except for Jason, had inherited. Yet instead of describing it, Brad simply told him to watch and learn.

Then as Jason was leaving, Brad made sure that the doctor would keep this all quiet. Jason reaffirmed he would and continued on with his day. Despite their green skin, his patients all still seemed human. Briefly he tried to see if his predecessor had written anything on it, yet he found nothing.

On Saturday, Jason saw something else quite strange in the otherwise southern god fearing town. What had started out with everyone wearing summer clothes turned into even less. Both men and woman began going about topless. Even more, those who had nothing else to do during the day found a nice spot to lay in the sun.

As she had many times in the past, Melinda came to see him. Like the others, she had shed her shirt and bra. This time she found some soft grass to lay under the bright sun while gossiping with Jason who sat beside her.

"This sun feels so great," she gossiped enjoying the moment.

"Yea, it's nice."

"It makes me feel so alive. Just like I've eaten a good meal."

"So it's doing more than just heating you up? That you're getting energy from it?"

"Like plants," she absentmindedly added.

"You mean, the green in your skin is chlorophyll?"

"You catch on quick city slicker!"

"How can that be?"

Melinda simply shrugged, "Who knows?"

"Things are just getting stranger and stranger," added Jason offhandedly.

"Welcome to Perking Mississippi," Melinda joked as she closed her eyes and enjoyed the sun.

For a couple silent moments, Jason pondered how everyone in the town had suddenly gained chlorophyll. Yet nothing in his medical training could explain it. He had the urge to call someone and ask. However, he remembered he had been sworn to keep it a secret and would learn over time by observation.

With nothing else better to do, Jason let himself ponder Melinda's beautiful green chest.

"What do you think," she asked watching him gaze at her.

"They're very nice."

"Thank you."

Once everyone had turned a full green, business at Maggie's Diner had slowed down. Before long he was the only customer before she shut down to save costs. Jason figured with everyone capable of photosynthesis, they had little need to eat.

Despite the strangeness, Jason and Melinda began hanging out more. There was even a point where she chose to stay with him after the sun went down. In the end, it was not long before she was sleeping in his bed every night. This happened often enough that soon she started living with him. Jason found her to be quite appealing beyond her good looks. That she was exceptionally bright despite her high school education.

With her living with him, one morning Jason began to notice something else weird about her. He found numerous raised bumps had started to form along her arms, legs, and shoulders. Melinda was not worried about them and was actually a bit giddy. When pressed, she only mentioned they were moving along quite nicely.

Within a short time, Jason observed that everyone between the ages of sixteen to about forty were all forming those bumps. Those too young or too old only had green skin. The kids each spoke of how they wished they could grow them while the older adults wistfully looked on with fond smiles.

About a week after those bumps formed, Melinda happily woke Jason up. He turned on the lights as she held out her arms. Each of the bumps on her limbs and shoulders had opened up into small green leaves. They looked like magnolia leaves growing out of her arms, legs, and shoulders.

When he touched the tip of one, Melinda shuddered and said she could feel his touch. That not only were leaves growing out of her but they were actually a part of her. They were rather sensitive to the point she could not put on anything over them.

Melinda peered out the window and saw the sun fully rising and quickly darted outside. She stood there in the morning grass holding out her arms and spreading her legs so all her newly grown leaves could enjoy the sunlight. Melinda gasped that with them she felt even better and more alive. With the diner closed, she had nothing better to do then lay down in the grass and soak up the sun all day.

As Jason went out about his day he saw everyone who had those bumps now sported small magnolia leaves growing out of their limbs. Like Melinda, most just lay on the grass. The few who did have to work tried their best to keep their leaves in the sun.

A week later found her leaves had become full sized. Melinda did little but lay in the grass in front of the hospital. At night, she wistfully watched him eat. Each time he offered her food, she claimed she was not even remotely hungry. Finally, with her leaves rather sensitive, all they could do was lay atop the bed.

One night, Jason carefully shifted over to lovingly stare into her green face. Melinda happily peered back at him. Then he noticed something new about her. It seemed as if there was a bump forming on her forehead near her hair line. He reached out and played his finger across it causing Melinda to suddenly inhale.

"That's sensitive!"

"What is it?" On the one hand it felt like a raised welt. Yet he also noticed a bit of hardness deep within it.

"It's the next stage of the process."

"What process?"

"You'll see soon enough. Trust me, it's such a beautiful thing," she cooed before leaning up to kiss him. By this point, Jason had stopped questioning what he was witnessing.

To make sure, he peered at numerous other people. He saw that everyone who had leaves now also had a bump forming on their foreheads. Each was thrilled to grow them.

Unlike the leaves which took a couple weeks to mature, their bumps grew in quickly. What started as a fleshy welt had formed into a green bud within a day. By this point, everyone with leaves could do nothing but lay in the sun while their buds grew. The only times they came in was when the sun went down.

On the third day Melinda awoke very excited. The pod in the center of her forehead was over an inch long and a half an inch wide. It sort of looked like a horn made out of plant material.

"Come on, it's time," she exclaimed grabbing Jason by the arm.

"Could I at least put on something?"

"Hurry hurry, the gathering is coming and I want you there."

"Alright," Jason sighed throwing on a pair of shorts and a shirt. When the pair stepped out of his house, they saw that the entire town was up bright and early. Those without leaves were escorting those who had them.

Before long the entire town stood in the park before the grange. In the center of the open space were the ones had leaves and buds. While on the outside stood those who did not.

Jason wanted to ask an older man standing beside him a few questions. Instead, he shushed the doctor and indicated that he watch and learn. Thus, he stood silent among the watchers.

Melinda, like the others, faced the rising sun. Her eyes were closed and her face looked peaceful. For the next ten minutes everyone stood silently. Then a few of the onlookers began to gasp.

Peering at Melinda, Jason realized the pod growing out of her forehead had started to split open. As it opened up larger,

he saw inside numerous silky white petals. Before long they spread out enough to expose a yellow stamen. Within a few minutes Melinda had a large white magnolia flower growing out of her forehead. Jason checked a few others to see that everyone who had leaves now also had white flowers on their foreheads.

Silently, each with a flower slowly opened their eyes. They then turned around to face each other. Before Jason's eyes, he watched Melinda walked over to a man in his thirties. She softly looked him in the eyes. After that, they brought their heads together so that both flowers touched. Then very gently they rubbed their flower stamens together. Next both people turned to someone else, Melinda to another man, the first guy to another woman. Then they repeated the same thing and over the next two hours they went about touching their flowers to each other's.

Finally, one by one, each person with a flower softly laid on the ground and passed out. Then the onlookers cautiously walked in and picked them up. They were careful not to hurt the person's leaves or flower. Jason went over to Melinda, reached down, and picked her up. The mayor saw this and gave the doctor an approving nod.

At first Jason wondered if he could run some tests as he brought her to his home. Yet instead, he took her to his bed and laid her down atop his sheets. Then he turned off the lights and left her alone.

A little later on in the day Jason checked on her and saw that the flower had closed. By nightfall her leaves and pod were beginning to wither. Finally, on the following morning all of the stuff she had grown had fallen off.

When he checked her later that day, he saw that everywhere there had been a leaf was now just plain green skin. Even the spot where her flower had bloomed was unblemished. Along with all that, her green skin pigmentation began to fade.

As Melinda awoke near nightfall on the third day, her skin and body had returned back to normal. Even more, her appetite had returned. That evening, the two ate steaks he grilled and relaxed the rest of the night.

On the one hand, Perking had returned to normal with Maggie's Diner full of people. Along with that, no one was running around topless, green, or sprouting leaves. However, after that flower touching event, every female who participated saw their abdomens begin to bulge.

One morning Melinda lay nude on the bed caressing her own swelling stomach. She let him touch it and he could feel something round and hard growing in what he presumed was her womb. When pressed, she mentioned the same thing as before, that he had to wait and see. Though her voice had a bit of a playful tenderness to it.

On Friday, one of the men who participated in the flower event came by Jason's house. He indicated that because Melinda was living with him, Jason had to follow the man. She told the doctor that he needed to help them out.

The pair walked out to a field behind the grange. There all the men between the ages sixteen to forty began wielding shovels. With Jason, each started to dig up the sod and before long they had created three long furrows in the dirt. After that, they spread manure and fertilizer along the newly turned dirt.

Then on Saturday Melinda awoke feeling contractions. At first Jason wanted to assist her. However, she nearly screamed that he had to take her to the field.

Practically carrying Melinda, Jason brought her to the furrows he helped dig the day before. There he saw the other men were doing the same as him. Once Melinda saw the spot, she had enough power to walk over to a newly dug up earth.

With Jason there to steady her, Melinda squatted over the dirt and began grunting. With a soft scream, she pushed hard. Taking a moment to breathe, she then pushed even harder.

"It's coming," Melinda yelled out.

Before Jason, a large brown seed dropped from between Melinda's legs. It landed on the freshly dug earth along with a bit of the woman's juices. Jason briefly peered over to see that every female there had given birth to similar seeds.

Melinda took a moment to catch her breath. Then she stepped out of the furrow and pondered the seed. "Isn't it so beautiful," she gasped grabbing onto his arm out of energy.

"Yea, I guess," Jason stammered.

"Don't worry, it'll grow into something beautiful soon. But now I got to take a shower and you need to bury the seed."

With that she kissed Jason on the cheek. Then she and the other women slowly made their way back home. Each seemed to be waddling a bit. Meanwhile the men began passing out shovels. They started burying the seeds and carefully compacting the soil. Afterword, the group went about erecting a wire fence to keep the animals away.

Upon giving birth to the seeds, every female returned to normal. Over the winter the town acted like any other southern town. They harvested their crops, celebrated the holidays, and everything seemed generally normal and sedate.

Along the furrows, small shoots formed where the seeds were buried. Each had a single tree like sapling. Before long they had similar leaves like the ones the people had grown.

When spring arrived, those plants had grown three to four feet tall. Every one of them had small branches with numerous leaves. When buds began sprouting, the whole town became giddy. Then finally when those buds opened up into small magnolia like flowers, a celebration was thrown.

On that day, Jason was asked to get his medical bag and come to the field. When he arrived, he found the entire town waiting. Both men and women had shovels while others held buckets of water.

After making sure Jason was ready, the villagers approached the first plant. Quietly whispering to Melinda revealed to the doctor that no one knew who laid what nor did anyone care. Thus he stood there with his medical bag as a few people carefully began to dig around the plant. Discarding the shovels, they then used their hands the rest of the way.

Jason leaned in to see what they were uncovering. Whatever it was had been caked with dirt. Softly and reverently they removed the soil. Yet instead of uncovering some sort of roots or tubers, those people revealed a human baby in a fetal curl. The shoot which grew out from the ground seemed to emerge from the child's stomach.

Softly the villagers removed the baby from the ground and began washing the dirt off with a bucket of water. Then one

leaned in with hand sheers to cut the plant shoot close to the baby's stomach. Upon doing that, another person came in and slapped the baby's bottom. That caused the child to come awake and started screaming like any other newborn baby.

After that they waved Jason in. He rushed over to examine the child. A quick peek between the baby's legs revealed her to be a girl. Plus, he was amazed to feel her skin which felt like any normal child's. Using his stethoscope, he discovered a normal heartbeat and breathing. Also she was showing all the signs of a healthy baby. The only odd thing were the remnants of the plant shoot poking out of her belly.

Jason did not know what else to do but proclaim the child healthy. That caused everyone to cheer. Then the mayor pulled out a book and called two names. The named people, a married couple, walked forward and was given the baby girl. The pair gazed upon her as if they had given birth to her.

For the rest of the day the town went from plant to plant uncovering babies. All in all they dug up fifteen girls and ten boys. Each went to a married couple, some who already had children and others who were receiving their first child.

Afterword, Melinda hung off Jason's arm as he finished up with the last child. She was so happy to see the babies being born. The woman even told him that not only was that day each baby's birthday, but it was also everyone else's birthday as well.

Later on, close to night fall, the town celebrated. Cake was served and the reverend held a special sermon. Melinda promised Jason if they got married they would receive a baby as well. The look she gave him made the doctor think she was thinking of doing that before the next cycle started again! In the end, he knew exactly why the town was isolated. That no matter how weird it was, what he had witnessed had been something beautiful. It was a secret Jason was pleased to keep as he settled in as Perking's doctor.