

311 words, column #30
Java Talk
(for November 15, 2007 to November 21, 2007)

Every Age Is The Best Age

A Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh

“Now we are about to begin and you must attend! And when we get to the end of the story, you will know more than you do now.” The quote is one of many in a collection of often-repeated story beginnings and endings from the oral tradition.

There are lots of ways to begin a story. Sometimes they begin at the end. I have been thinking about when I was very little and lived with my grandmother for most of one year. I thought my mother and brother were living there, too, but he was nine years older than me and my mother was going through her nursing training, so they stayed at our house, which I had somehow imagined had been rented out for that year until it was time for all of us to move back. But there were only two bedrooms at my grandmother’s house, and one was mine and one was hers. Sometimes, when my eyes are welling up and I don’t want them to be noticed, I am reminded of my grandmother wiping her eyes when I was there. I just thought they were sore, but in retrospect, I often wonder if she had been thinking about something dear that made tears come to her eyes.

Endings have all sorts of meanings, too. Since stories are often told during the long winter months, one teller might end a longer tale by saying, “There now, I have chopped off half the winter.” A listener might know another story is done when they hear, “Then three apples fell from heaven. One for the storyteller, one for he who listens, and one for he who understands.” However, if need be, storytellers can make it very clear by simply concluding with, “The end.” But a story that is bringing tears to my eyes finishes with, “That was just the beginning.”

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