

Farmer Gross had a plum orchard. In the fall when the plums turned from green to purple and acquired a light powdery dusting, the orchard became a target for pilfering youth. Invariably farmer Gross's dog, who come fall, became the resident of the orchard, which was well fenced, foiled most attempts by barking, bringing someone out to the orchard and so the predators, weather two legged or four were discouraged and the orchard remained non-violated.

Red headed Mike, that's me, took this as a personal challenge. When I was in the general store buying some hard sour ball candy, farmer Gross was bragging that no one steals his plums. I can not say why, but the way he was boasting just rubbed me the wrong way. His dog was the best watch dog in that fenced in orchard! No one got by that dog. Well wasn't I smarter than a dog? There had to be some way to get plums and beat the dog.

I left the general store and went to the town butcher shop. The butcher would buy his animals from the farmers and do the butchering for the town folks. There always seemed to be in the yard behind the butcher shop, in a covered metal container, some scrap bones with some gristle still on them. The smell from the container was apparent when there was something in it. I was in luck, I opened the container and took out part of a leg bone, first theft, wrapping it in newspaper I found nearby secreted it in the back of the wagon under some rags, second misdemeanor. Back on the farm, bone still wrapped hidden in my bedroom, now for planning. Bone tied to stick, stick to be secured to fence where the wind would blow from dog to me where I would enter the orchard. My scent would not reach dog. Gather a shirt full of plums and farmer Gross's brag no longer valid! I could boast to my peers I beat the dog!

One mild day not long before the plan was to be implemented I went to the orchard. Checked the wind, coaxed the dog to the correct part of the orchard with some scraps from mom's kitchen. Then I went to the other side of the orchard, the dog was still worrying my mom's scraps tied to the fence, did not even look in my direction. It would work!

Two days later, the plums absolutely ready for picking, my bone securely tied to my stick, the stick tied to the fence, the wind in my favor I proceeded. The dog busy with the bone, me up in the tree filling my shirt. DISASTER!! The wind shifts and dog is under my tree barking his head off! Farmer Gross comes out with a scatter gun loaded with bird shot. "Come on down" "Not till you tie the dog" Dog tied I come down, "your Al's boy lets go see your father" He calls to his wife "call Al tell him I'm coming over and It's important"

Farmer Gross and I are invited to our living room and farmer Gross displays the stick with the bone still attached, my father says nothing goes to the kitchen and gets mom's scale "empty your shirt into the scale" I do as I am told. My father looks more embarrassed than angry. Farmer Gross would you say "TWO POUNDS" He agrees, my father then says "How much damage to the tree, would you say one dollar fifty" I start to protest and one look from dad and I shut up. Farmer Gross takes the bait and agrees. My father then proceeds "Fair value for the plums .50 cents damage to the tree \$1.50 total \$2.00. Putting the plums in a paper sack he hands it to farmer Gross, saying "There can be no gain to the perpetrator of a crime" Mike will come to work for you @25cents an hour till

his debt is paid, fair retribution, is that satisfactory? MR. Gross agrees and I am to be at his place to-morrow at 8a.m. thank you Mr. Gross, the rest is between my son and I. End of incident, hardly, now comes the lecture. Do you realize that you just took the first step to becoming a murderer! What I yell "Shut up! And listen! this was a premeditated robbery, you are a thief." "Two lbs. of plums and no tree damage" "Shut up! thievery leads to violence and murder!, so you are lucky, Mr. Gross did not insist on putting you in jail and making you stand trial. You will go to work for farmer Gross for 8hours @25cents /hr. I hope you will have learned a lesson. END OF HIEST!! Not quite, taking the scale back to the kitchen he says to mom "I got caught in an apple orchard just about when I was his age"