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### Resurrection

No story can exist without its characters. Not only does it have to have characters but those characters must be believable and realistic. They must spark a reaction out of the reader.

A good character is someone the reader can relate to, if only in the smallest aspect. Manuel from "The Plum Plum Pickers" by Raymond Barrio is a perfect example of a character almost anyone can relate to. He is the working class man with the two-faced boss that only looks out for himself. He is the family man working just to put food on the table. He embodies human qualities that all of us have, the need to feel alive and to live our own lives, the desire for respect and humor, the need to rebel against repression, and the courage to effect change. Manuel is a developing character. The whole story builds up to the single moment he takes charge of his life and leads others to follow his example.

Manuel faces many conflicts in his life. At the most basic level is the external conflicts between Manuel and his work environment. It is a man versus nature kind of struggle. Manuel Gutierrez is a Mexican man working in California during the dry season in the late 1960's. He works in some of the most miserable conditions possible. He picks apricots and prunes out in the hot sun all day. The air is so dry that his sweat gets burned away before it even has a chance to get his shirt wet. He only gets a break at lunch and midafternoon, where he eats a small meal and takes a chance to relax and try to rebuild his strength and morale. The rest of

the day is spent in the repetition of going up and down ladders with buckets to pick the fruit. The only possible explanation for Manuel's putting up with this extremely demanding job is desperation. He has a wife and kids at home to feed and jobs are hard to find and fiercely competitive.

Manuel's job also impacts him mentally. Day after day he goes to a job that is his own personal Hell. He works from sun up to sun down. He gets up everyday knowing that he has to go to a place where he feels trapped and alone. He is caged there; he even compares himself to an animal. He is like an ox people use to haul things and for physical labor. There is no respite for him, no escape. The internal conflict this would create on his mind has to be hard to deal with. It tells a lot about his character that he even has the will power to get out of bed in the morning and go to work, but go he does because he has responsibilities and if he doesn't work his family doesn't eat.

In the beginning of the story Manuel is defeated and hopeless. He is trapped in a never ending cage of apricot trees. He sees no end in sight. Even though he is very physically fit, as he must be to survive his job, his crew chief works him until he drops, literally. He gets so hot and exhausted that he blacks out while he is up the ladder picking and drops his bucket. Manuel is a "truly refined wreck" (1); he goes through the motions doing whatever he's told, whatever he has to, and the price he pays for it is his will and freedom. He is a tired, drained, exhausted, robotic, hopeless, trapped, "wreck" of a man. He is imprisoned in an unfair world by a need for money and a lack of labor laws.

On top of everything else Manuel must deal with he is cursed by having a cruel boss. This boss is Roberto Morales. Morales is the antagonist of the story and Manuel's other

external conflict. He is the character that Manuel has such strong reactions to, and an intense dislike of, in the story. Morales is a flat, static character. He shows no change or remorse for how he treats his workers and doesn't change at all throughout the story. He is also a stock character in the sense that he is the classic bad guy: mean, greedy, and beguiling, in short he is to Manuel what Iago is to Othello. He smiles at his crew like they're his friends while he tries to steal their money. Even though he is a Mexican just like those who work for him, he sold them out and betrayed them to gain power. He became a crew chief, and even though he claims to be one of them, to have suffered the same as them, he treats them as his slaves. There is no equality between Morales and his workers. He has the power and he knows it. However, he makes a grave mistake in underestimating Manuel.

Morales announcing that he was going to take "two cents from every bucket" (2) was the last straw for Manuel. He couldn't take it anymore. He had put up with too much and now this greedy man was going to take his hard earned money and Manuel wasn't going to take that lying down. This money is all that he has to keep food in his kids' stomachs. He finally takes a stand against Morales. He kicks over his bucket full of fruit to keep Morales from taking it. This is the most significant action of the story; the moment when everything changes for Manuel. Not only does he deny Morales the money that he keeps for himself, as well as the money for paying the gueros, but he makes a life changing realization. He finds that Morales does not hold all the power. His power is based on the fact that they, the workers, provide him with what he needs to get paid; if they refuse to work then he is out just the same as they are. Morales has no choice but to yield to them. By that one simple act of kicking over the bucket to deny Morales, Manuel shows the other workers that they can stand up to Morales and don't

have to take all his abuse. They have worth and pride. He realizes that there is something more to life than picking apricots, and through his actions all his fellow workers learn it too. The second they kick over their buckets, they throw off the chains that constant belittling and feelings of worthlessness cause and earn a degree of freedom.

Manuel must know what the consequences of his actions will be and yet he stands up against Morales. This shows great courage, and a touch of desperation, on the part of Manuel. Morales can, and his character being what is probably will, retaliate. At the very least he can fire Morales and maybe keep him from finding work elsewhere. This would have major effects on his family. If he was already so desperate that he chose to work picking apricots his family would probably starve without the income. On the other hand, Morales could think it would be easier just to kill him and be done with it. However, even if Manuel left, he had already started that spark of hope and thought in his coworkers. They now have the taste of freedom.

Manuel can't ever go back to the way things were. His breakthrough is too great. He now has a sense of self and pride that would be wasted if his life were to go back to how it was at just the beginning of the day. How could he go back to taking orders and lying back and letting Morales get away with everything after making his "extravagant discovery" (3)? His life is irrevocably changed.

There is no doubt that Manuel is a developing character. He goes from being a downtrodden, mechanical, slave of Morales, and by extension the gueros, to this strong man with a sense of power who the other workers look up to. He freed himself from his jail, which he originally saw no way out of. Was this intentional? No. It was an act of desperation and anger, but finally doing and saying something about the wrongful treatment of the apricot

pickers is what saved him. He was resurrected from his old life where he was little more than a slave who gets to go home at night and became a man in his own right who has the ability to change his life.