

Grandfather's Family

- a number fact family story

This story sets the stage to work with number families more analytically after the children experience a full story/recall/draw cycle. Through story and image it gives the children a living experience of the balance and the units described by fact families.

Grandfather: the children had been hearing about Grandfather since before they could talk. They had heard about Grandfather's deep belly laugh - the laugh that rolled across the land and tickled everyone it touched. They had heard about Grandfather's long white beard that made you want to snuggle in close. They had heard about Grandfather's broad shoulders, where their mother rode high in the sky when she was a child. And they had heard about Grandfather's resounding songs that called the birds from all through the wood to join. Since before they could walk or talk or even crawl, stories of Grandfather had filled the little boy and girl. They knew everything about him, of this they were sure. But they had never seen Grandfather, for he lived far away and traveled from place to place running the carnival for the County Fair.

Every year as Fall approached and the people of their little village readied their corn and pumpkins, their sheep and goats, their chickens and ducks to be presented at the County Fair, the little boy and girl would ask their mother if this year Grandfather might bring his carnival to *their* fair. But, no, it was never the year for their fair - Grandfather was far away at someone else's County Fair. Each year the boy and girl went to their fair and played with the sheep and goats. They collected eggs from the chickens and ducks. They played ring toss, and balloon darts, and all the other games. Sometimes they even won prizes, but mostly they thought about Grandfather and wished they were riding his carousel and throwing darts at his balloon - and most of all sitting on his knee snuggling in his long white beard and being tickled by his rolling laughter. But Grandfather was far away and he couldn't come to see them.

One year just as the corn was ripening, and the leaves were turning to gold and crimson, and everyone was readying for the opening of the County Fair, Mama took the little boy and girl on her knees. "Tomorrow," she whispered to them, "tomorrow is the day Grandfather's carnival will come to our County Fair." The children hopped off Mama's knee in excitement. They began chattering questions at her so quickly that she could not even understand. But looking at their shining eyes and listening to their giggles as they jumped up and down, Mama knew what they meant. "Tomorrow will be here much faster if we all head off to bed. First thing in the morning I will take you to meet your Grandfather."

The boy and girl ran to their room, slid into their pajamas, and jumped into their beds before Mama could even sing them a song or kiss them goodnight. And there they lay trying with all their might to fall asleep so morning could come quickly. With all their might they tried. As hard as they could squeeze their eyes shut, they tried. As still as they could possibly lie, they tried. But try as they might, they could not fall asleep. Stars rose

and they could not sleep. The nightingale sang, and they could not sleep. The clock ticked on and they could not sleep. Finally, just as the dawn began to color the sky, the little girl said to the little boy, "I think Grandfather will be up now getting his carnival ready for the Fair. Maybe we should go help him."

"But Mama said she would take us to meet Grandfather," replied the little boy.

"We go to the fair on our own to help Mr. Frawley with his sheep and Mr. Dreiling with his pies. We help Mrs. Thompson milk her cows and Mrs. Johnson brush her sheep. I'm sure Mama wouldn't mind if we went ahead to help Grandfather."

"But how will we find him?" asked the little boy.

"We know everything about him," said the little girl. "I'm sure we will know him as soon as we see him."

And the boy and girl began recounting everything they knew about Grandfather: his broad shoulders that stood high in the air, his belly laugh that tickled even just to think about, his great songs that called the birds to join in, his long white beard that made you want to snuggle close. Yes, they knew everything about Grandfather - and they were sure he needed help to set up his carnival. So the boy and girl quietly dressed in the first light of dawn and headed out the kitchen door and over to the County Fairgrounds.

Quietly they walked through the sleeping village, past Mr. Dreiling's bakery, and Mr. Frawley's meat market. Out past the last of the sleeping houses they walked, not even whispering to each other but hurrying on to find Grandfather. Finally they came to the open meadow and just on the other side they could see the ferris wheel standing tall at the Fair Grounds. Grandfather's ferris wheel, they thought, and the little boy and little girl burst into a run and ran as fast as they could right through tall meadow grasses all the way to the Fair-grounds.

There they stood at the edge of the carnival, sure they would know Grandfather in an instant. But there before them stood many old men with long white beards and broad shoulders. Some hammered in stakes to set up the booths for games. Some hauled the great metal rails to build the carousel. Some cleaned and oiled the gears on the ferris wheel. And all of them laughed and sang, with their big bellies jiggling and their long beards quivering.

The boy and the girl looked at each other. How would they know their Grandfather? They began to walk slowly among the old men, hoping they would know just which was theirs. They thought of everything Mama had said about Grandfather over the years. Back and forth they went, naming everything they could - but all the old men seemed to have just that very thing about him. Finally, the little boy got a bright look in his eye and jumped to his feet. "Doesn't Mama always say that each of us has something just like Grandfather and if you rolled the two of us together it's almost like having him?"

"Yes," replied the little girl, "Mama says that's what she does when she misses Grandfather - she looks at us and it's almost like having him back."

"So all we need to do," said the little boy, "is to find someone like us and we will have our Grandfather!"