Black and White with Partial Colour Effect in Photoshop Elements

One of the more popular photo effects you may have seen is where a photo is converted to black and white, except for one object in the photo which is made to stand out by keeping it in color. There are many different ways to achieve this effect. I'm going to show you a non-destructive way to do it using adjustment layers in Photoshop Elements. The same method will work in Photoshop or other software that offers adjustment layers.

Create a new adjustment layer, choose Gradient Map as the adjustment instead of Hue/Saturation. In the Gradient Map dialog, make sure you have a black to white gradient selected, as shown here. If you have any other gradient, click the arrow next to the gradient and select the "Black, White" gradient thumbnail. (You may need to click the small arrow on the gradient palette and load the default gradients.)

If your image looks like infrared instead of black and white, you have the gradient in reverse, and you can just tick the "Reverse" button under gradient options.

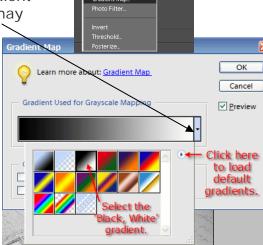Click OK to apply the gradient map.

Now we'll give this photo a punch of color by restoring color to the apples. Because we used an adjustment layer, we still have the colour image in the background layer. We are going to paint on the adjustment layer's mask to reveal the colour in the background layer below.

The layer mask lets you erase your adjustment by painting on it. White reveals the adjustment, black blocks it completely, and shades of gray partially reveal it. We are going to reveal the colour of the apples from the background layer by painting on the layer mask with black.

Zoom in on the apples in the photo so they fill your workspace. Activate the brush tool, pick an appropriately sized brush, and set opacity to 100%. Set the foreground color to black (you can do this by pressing D, then X). Now click on the layer mask thumbnail in the layers palette and then begin painting over the apples in the photo.

You probably painted colour onto some areas that you didn't intend to. No worries. Just switch the foreground color to white by and erase away the color back to gray using a small brush. Zoom in close and clean up any edges.