

Years 5-6 Category Winner

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Different But The Same

Unfamiliar instruments beat to a steady rhythm. A consistent blur of beeps and soft whirs. Strangers moved efficiently, then left, muttering anxiously outside the door. One lone visitor, a child, sat beside the hospital bed. Her eyes were fixed on the thin, pale body lying peacefully. She looked so fragile and vulnerable, with her silver hair streaked across the threadbare, cheap pillow. The child missed seeing her small twinkly eyes, now all she saw was closed eyelids. There was only a faint trace of the great grandmother she'd been before. She had a swarm of questions spiralling through her head, ones that she was certainly dreading answers for. She took a deep breath, realising that she hadn't done so in a while. The oxygen felt satisfyingly welcome, calming her. It allowed her to sort through her crowded thoughts, and to gently nudge her back into the positives. She tried to remember that her great grandmother had been lucky to live the life she had, all the things she'd achieved, the people who were with her every step. Maybe now she can finally rejoice with them again.

Her eyes were steadily shut, and she felt no urge to open them. After years of feeling a slight prickly shudder at the one word, "death", she knew now how silly she'd been. She'd grasped every opportunity to shine, with a stray thought forever whispering in the back of her mind... "you only have one chance." Or, "you only live once, you may never get another shot." She took all that life had thrown at her, whether she was happy or not. She hadn't ever wanted to end her life in regret. Never wanted to think of what could have been. Now, the only regret she had was never shoving away that one whisper in the back of her mind. Never letting herself be satisfied. To sit back, and reflect on the gorgeous gift she adored dearly. The one thing in her life that allowed her to push through, the thing that mattered most. Her family. She felt a pang of guilt. Family. The word triggered something deep inside her. She reminisced about the people in her life, the people who she'd soon be joining. And leaving behind.

She felt a sudden, gentle squeeze. A warm, smooth hand in her own. Without warning, her eyelids lifted slightly. She felt a jolt, a duty to peer through the thin layer of eyelashes. Perhaps the last glimpse of her great granddaughter. She was sitting close, wet smears around her face, a scrappy attempt to hide her tears. She felt a tear slide down her cheek, seeing her great granddaughter crying. With her last remaining strength she hoped that she'd know it's a happy tear. Just for her. She felt a warm glow deep inside herself, a place she hadn't felt anything before. It seemed to be lifting, tugging to be free. And with that, she knew it was time to go.

She looked down on the patient for the last time, immersed in deep love. A tear rolled down the wrinkly cheek. She felt it wasn't because she was fearfully awaiting death. Maybe, it represented her love. She didn't know what made her think this, but she felt certain it had some grain of truth. And no matter what, it formed a smile on her face. As she looked up at her parent's smiles, she knew that whatever happened, her family would be there for her. Despite living in a different generation to her great grandmother, she had had a family too. And that's what matters.