

ENGLISH: *CREATIVE WRITING*

A Grandmother's Love

The sun shone down on the woman's aging face, exaggerating her wrinkles and sun-spots. Thick green gloves protected her fragile hands as she gently pruned an already exquisite red rose bush. She pushed herself up off her knees, wincing slightly at the pain in her joints, and raised her chin in satisfaction as she viewed her expansive garden, adjacent to her large Edwardian house, overlooking the sparkling harbour. She inhaled the pleasant scent of roses, wattles and herbs accompanied by a symphony of carolling magpies, closed her eyes and smiled.

Suddenly, an ear-piercing electronic ringing silenced the birds and hauled her back into reality. Victoria grudgingly pulled her mobile out of her pocket.

'Hello?'

The word 'Mum,' sobbed through the static.

'Kate...'

'I fucked up,' she whimpered. Victoria scowled, opened her mouth to respond out of habit, before slowly closing it. 'I got busted dealing meth. DOCS went to my place while I was at the station 'cause they knew Xavier was there alone and just took off with him. You're his next-of-kin and he needs you.' It took a few moments for Victoria to comprehend what she had just heard. Her stomach lurched. An uncomfortable silence lingered between mother and daughter. 'They'll let you take him home with you. Please mum. Please.'

Within minutes of the call, Victoria overcame her anger and disappointment with her daughter and found herself driving to Westlawn, 100 kilometres away, to collect a grandson she had never met.

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Victoria pulled her silver Mercedes-Benz into the parking lot of the Police Station. She walked up a concrete path and the automatic door opened exhaling chilled air. A young woman in her early twenties emerged from the hallway as she walked up to the front desk. It was Kate. They embraced tentatively despite the handcuffs. A woman in a cheap business suit introduced herself as Ms Randal and reassured Victoria that she only need care for Xavier for a few weeks, until a foster family was found. After uncomfortable goodbyes with limited eye-contact, they headed back to Vaucluse.

'So Xavier,' she said as he continued to stare blankly out the window. 'You're five now... Did you start school this year?' There was no reply. Victoria looked in her rear vision mirror and signalled to enter the freeway. The trip continued in silence.

With the orange sun low in the sky behind them, the car finally pulled into the garage. Victoria took Xavier to the guest bedroom. 'You can place your bag in this cupboard, and come out into the kitchen when you're ready and I'll make some supper. What do you feel like?' He dumped his bag on the antique oak floorboards and walked out of the room without raising his head. Victoria collapsed onto the double bed and exhaled as she clutched her head feeling the stirrings of a migraine coming on. She swallowed two pills and walked towards the kitchen, spotting Xavier with his back to her, staring at the blank television in the living room. She switched it on and he immediately sat down in front of it. 'ABC Kids was probably his nanny back home,' she muttered to herself as she entered the kitchen to prepare a quick meal.

'Here you go, Xavier, I've made this just for us.' She placed two bowls on the dining table. Xavier stared at his bowl, pushed it away and crossed his arms. 'Oh come on, you didn't even try it!' He pushed the bowl onto the floor, creating a loud smash that echoed through the spacious house. His face lit up with fear, his wide eyes connected with Victoria's for a moment before he instinctively bolted into the guest room, slamming the door behind him.

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The sun crept through the cracks in the thick curtains of the master bedroom, spotlighting the few specks of dust spiralling through the air. The sound from the downstairs television penetrated the room, reminding Victoria that this impossible situation was ongoing. She arose and walked down to the living room.

'Good morning. Grandma's a sleepy head.' His eyes remained fixated on the television. 'Xavier?' her voice was noticeably fragile as her frustration escaped her body. 'I'm trying so hard Xavier, this isn't easy on me either.' His face remained exactly the same, staring blankly at the television. Victoria hastily retreated to the garden for sanctuary.

She sat in a cold wooden seat surrounded by a pallet of colours, scents and sounds of the garden. 'What am I to do?' she whispered, as a tear rolled down her face.

'Parsley,' a young voice said from her left.

'Xavier?'

'This is parsley,' he repeated, pointing at the carefully manicured patch of herbs.

'Y-yes,' she said. 'How did you know?'

'We have a herb garden. Mum said her mum taught her how to grow them.'

Victoria smiled.

'Can we cook some scrambled eggs with it?'

'Yes,' she laughed as she stood up and joined him picking the parsley. They both stood in the centre of the garden for a moment, savouring the ambiance, until an ear-piercing electronic ringing broke the silence.

'Hello?'

'Hello Mrs Thomas, it's Ms Randal from the Department of Community Services. I'm just calling to let you know that we've already found a place for Xavier. We can collect him in a few hours.'

Victoria looked down at the smiling child and made her decision. 'Thankyou Ms Randal, but that won't be necessary. Xavier will stay with me. After all, I am his Grandma.'