



Grandma

I used to visit my grandmother on a regular basis. She had been very lonely for long because my grandfather died really young. Well young enough for a grandfather I mean, at the age of sixty-seven... As my grandmother was not at all the kind of old lady who would have pets, the only things she had to entertain herself were a vegetable garden, books and some household products. That wasn't much at all you see, but she was fine with it. Oh yes, she also had a bright pink yoga matt...

As the perfect grandchild I wanted to be, I felt the duty to go visit her every other weekend. Don't misunderstand me, I do love her deeply, I promise. Well, she slightly scares the crap out of me because when you haven't been rubbing shoulders with her in a while, you're kind of freak out when she is all weird about meditation, witches things and yoga.

So as I said I used to visit her often. I would normally stay all Saturday and Sunday morning with her. Every time I'd arrive she'd be waiting on the steps of the front door in one of her gowns with that stunning smile of hers. Her smile had something special as if she had so much to give, so much to tell, and so much to hide.

To say hello she would always give me a kiss on the cheek and I would always say "how are you?", to what she would answer with her smile. I don't remember ever hearing my grandmother's voice, my parents told me she was dumb, but I thought that she didn't talk because she didn't feel the need to, that's all. We communicated with gestures, smiles, or with the mind. As weird as it sounds, we had some kind of connection, I would think about going for a walk, and she would in the simplest way fetch our coats and we'd go walking.

After our usual lunch in the garden, we would go read a book in the tiny living room. Then she would do her yoga at six pm while I would have my bath. I was really proud and amazed by how she stayed energetic for her age. She was radiant and healthy; she would live a very long life.

But one winter weekend, when I arrived she was not on the front door's steps as usual. I found her cleaning the kitchen with jerky gestures. When she saw me she seemed surprised, she didn't really kiss me, and answered "how are you?" with a smile which was not the lively and stunning one that I loved. The way she smiled that weekend was melancholic and I felt

like she didn't want me around. I was hurt, I couldn't understand what was happening. I spent more time in the bath tub than I used to, to release her from my presence.

When I entered the kitchen to help her with the dinner, she was sitting straight with a big copybook on her knees. As she felt my presence, she tightened the big book and turned her head to me. Her eyes were filled with sadness, so I started walking towards her.

"There are only three left."

I was not petrified because she had said something for the first time, but because of her panic.

"What do you need, grandma?" I asked carefully.

But she wouldn't talk more. She just closed the big book, stood up, walked past me and went to her room.

When she came back it was as if that instant never happened. We ate peacefully; she even smiled when I spilled some soup on my shirt. So I convinced myself that this disturbing moment never happened.

The next morning, when I left, she kissed and waved me goodbye harder than usual and with more intensity I would say.

Three days later my grand-mother's neighbor called me.

She was dead.

I went to her house to pack her stuff. I started gathering things that I could keep or, that I could donate at least.

Well, her house, which always seemed a bit messy to me, was all tidy, and everything, like every paper, was placed in boxes named "guarantee contracts" or "house papers" for example. It was so weirdly organized that I began to feel like she actually knew she was going to die. And as a perfect grandma, she wanted to make it easier for me.

A lot of objects reminded me of my childhood. I especially remember her working on her "big accounts book" and she never wanted me around when she did. But when I found that big accounts book, I actually understood that it was the book she held when I saw her for the last time. I immediately opened it to see that it was filled with numbers and calculations, with names like my mom's and dad's. I found out that they owed a lot of money to my grand-mother, but well, it didn't shock me that much because we have never been very wealthy. In the middle of the book I found a page with the name "Robert" on it. My grandpa. There were some big numbers at the beginning of the page, but the last ones struck me. Next to the date "10/06/94", there was the number "4". And it continued like this...

“11/06/94: 3”

“12/06/94: 2”

“13/06/94: 1”

...to zero. The day of my grandfather's death.

It was at that moment that the numbers talked to me. The copybook was not about money.

My name was at the top of the next page.

“08/09/1996 + 11 785 days =...”

And this is how I learnt when I was going to die.

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