

The Week Without Grandma – Ruby, Year 3, NSW

As Tess walked into her room, she admired her sparkly, purple bedspread. Her grandmother had bought it for her birthday last year. She adored it. Smiling softly, Tess looked up and saw brown eyes reflected in the window. Kind eyes, just like grandma's. She lived with her parents, Molly and Theodore, brothers Toby and Tom and her beloved grandmother Rose at the bottom of a steep slope at the outskirts of town. Tess could smell something delicious from the lower level of her house. Grandma was making curry for dinner. She could almost taste it. Suddenly, Tess felt a cold breeze touch her skin. It was coming from the window. A storm had just begun and she could tell it was a huge one.

Walking down the stairs and into the kitchen, she saw her brother Toby sitting down at the table finishing off his homework.

“Hi grandma! Are you making curry for dinner?”

“Yes, I am Tess. Would you like to help?”

“Yes, please!”

Tess's grandmother pulled a small, wooden chopping board out of the cupboard and passed her some cucumber and coriander.

“Why don't you start by chopping these to make the yoghurt dressing for the curry?”

“I'm not sure I know how to chop them,” Tess replied.

Her grandmother walked around the kitchen bench and started to slice the long, green, cucumber. “Have a go. Copy what I just did.”

Tess picked up the knife, but the cucumber felt so slippery that she wasn't sure she could cut it like grandma.

“But I don't think I can do this well, grandma.”

“Never give up, kiddo. Give things a go!”

And with that, Tess picked up the knife and started cutting. Her pieces weren't as perfect, but at least she'd done it by herself.

“Dinner's ready!”

“Please don't yell, Tess! It hurts my ears.”

Toby poked his tongue out at Tess. Her grandmother saw and gave him a look as hard as nails.

“Sorry, gran.”

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It was nine o'clock and Tess was still awake. She was about to go into her parents' room to say one last good night, but as she was making her way down the corridor, she saw her mother, father, brothers and several people in funny-looking uniforms gathered in her grandmother's room.

Her grandmother was lying on the bed with her eyes closed like she was fast asleep.

"Grandma!" yelled Tess.

Her mother's arms reached out for her. "I'm sorry, sweetie." "

What's happened?" she cried.

"I'm so sorry, Tess. Grandma has passed away."

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On Monday morning Tess woke up and there was no one to make her pancakes because gran wasn't there. She walked downstairs. Toby, Tess's older brother by two years, gave her a hug. Then Tom, who was fifteen, crouched down and gave them both a hug. This made Tess feel so much better. She wasn't alone in her sadness. Tess settled for a bowl of cereal for breakfast. Would she ever get to taste those delicious, fluffy pancakes again?

When she arrived at school that morning, she told her friends about the night before. But she could feel her eyes start to water and her heart start to beat faster. And all of a sudden, she felt different. She found it hard to get the words out to tell her friends what had happened. So, she told her closest friend and asked them to share with the others. Her friends gathered around her and gave her a big group hug and once more, she didn't feel so alone in her sadness.

Once Tess got home, she opened her bag and retrieved her homework. Picking up her pencil to begin, she sat there staring at the page of numbers and blank spaces. She was struggling. She wasn't very good at math and usually grandma was there to help her with it.

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On Tuesday morning Tess got up early and made herself avocado on toast. When she was at school her friends didn't mention what had happened. They knew she would talk to them about her grandmother when she felt ready. Usually on a Tuesday afternoon, she and gran would go to the library. So, that afternoon she went by herself. She didn't know where all the books were. She ended up in the aisle titled 'COOKING' and saw books her grandmother would have loved. They used to sit for hours flicking through pages that had the most tempting, delicious pictures on the front covers. They had borrowed many of them before, mostly ones with cakes and treats for afternoon tea, but one particular book caught Tess's eye that afternoon. She recognised the bright yellow and green colours of a curry that they had made before together. So, she borrowed it and carried it home close to her chest.

When she got home, she asked her mother if she could help her make one of the recipes from the cookbook.

“Of course, sweetie! Should we make it for tonight’s dinner?”

“Oh, yes please!” answered Tess.

Tess knew exactly which recipe she wanted to make. She leant down to the kitchen cupboard and pulled out the same small, wooden chopping board that her grandmother had passed her just a few days earlier. She started chopping the vegetables with her mother’s help and within a short time the familiar smell of the fragrant curry returned to the kitchen.

Tess served each member in her family the curry.

“This is delicious!” smiled her dad.

The whole family sat and ate together in silence as they remembered gran’s great cooking.

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It was Wednesday morning when Tess truly realized that her grandmother was not coming back. Ever. She was praying for her even though she knew she was in heaven. She looked over at her clock. 8:45 am. She’d usually left for school by now!

She arrived home later that afternoon and found herself thinking about what her and grandma would usually be doing. Knitting, Tess decided. But she wasn’t allowed to knit without an adult. And grandma was no longer there to help her with it.

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It was Thursday morning and Tess arrived at school earlier than usual. She couldn’t concentrate. Her teacher saw that she was staring off out the window, so she asked her to come over to her desk. Once there, she gave her a little hug. Tess knew she didn’t need to explain the problem. Her teacher gave her a wink, and suggested she sit in the reading corner with a book until the bell went for home time.

When Tess arrived home, she once again started her homework. But an hour passed and she was finding it hard without her grandmother’s help. This Thursday, it was Tess’s mother - not her gran - cooking the roast dinner. It had always been her grandmother’s favourite.

“Mum?”

“Yes, honey?”

“I think I might need some help.”

Slowly, the pair worked through her math until it was finished.

That night, everyone at the dinner table was quiet as they ate, knowing gran would’ve loved the roast.

At bedtime, Tess reached for her grandmother’s favourite book: *Little Women*. She could see why she’d liked it. It was so interesting how four girls could be part of the same family and yet

all be so different to one another. Tess stayed up very late reading and did not want to go to sleep. But eventually the book slipped from her hands and landed in her lap. She fell asleep, the moon shining through the window next to her bed.

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On Friday morning, Tess made her sparkly, purple bed, slipping *Little Women* back onto the shelf. Today she had a dance competition and the best part was that it was during school hours!

A few hours later, she was dancing to her favourite song, 'I Want You'. The judges looked amazed as she performed with her group. So amazed, they won the competition! Tess was so happy that her heart felt like it would beat right out of her chest with excitement. But she was also sad. Her gran wasn't there to watch her win. Tess had a feeling that she knew she had won and that gran was watching over her from heaven. And that felt good.

When Tess got home that afternoon, she realized how much she had done without her grandma. Almost a week had passed since that stormy night. She had made her own breakfast, visited the library, made a curry, finished her homework and won a dance competition almost all by herself. Even though she missed her gran terribly, she had the wonderful memories they had made together to get her through. Another week without grandma would be tough. But she remembered those words gran had said to her in the kitchen the night she passed away: "Never give up, kiddo. Give things a go!"