

## Death In A Storm - Alia, Year 7, VIC

Think about a storm; a big, dark storm. A storm so crushing it surrounds you until the thick clouds wrap you up and it all goes black.

That's what dying feels like.

I'm Georgia, and I'm dying of heart failure; I've only got one month left to live. My nan is my favourite person in the world, her name is also Georgia. She is the only person who can make this hospital light up. She is the only person who has made me feel human while I am sick. She treats me like myself, unlike my parents; all they have been doing is mumbled praying, and talking and crying between themselves. I know this means they care about me, but it only makes me feel more distant from them.

“Hello possum,” Nan announces as she makes her grand entrance into the hospital room.

My parents look up from their intertwined hands to look at Nan, then their heads sink as they look down to mumble out more prayers. Nan sits down on my bed and grips my hands.

“Let me do your hair now Georgie, there's no reason for it to get knotty now is there.” We exchange glances where I telepathically tell her that I am dying, and she says, “Well, you can be sick and stylish.” She puffs up her chest like she is Thomas Edison explaining how he invented the light bulb. I chuckle and sure enough my hair is brushed.

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Honestly, what confuses me about my parents is why are they praying. I have given up all faith because if God were here right now I wouldn't be dying, also it's not like he can stop me from dying. But Nan says it's good to have faith, and even though I'm dying it just means that I will go to heaven sooner and she can meet me up there when she's ready. That's why there is a cross hanging on my IV pole, to remind me what really matters.

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The storm in my mind is growing bigger and louder and scarier. I wish Nan were with me; if she was, she'd make the thunderstorm in my mind turn into light rain. She always steals things from the nurses which makes me laugh. When she's not around it only makes me realise how ugly this room is; a room of white and blue and all those machines that make those annoying noises.

There's a drip hanging beside my bed with lots of bags of painkillers that also make me really sleepy, but at least I can't feel the pain. Hanging from the IV pole is my cross that Nan bought me “to remind me that God will always be with me even though it doesn't feel like it.” That's

what Nan told me when she gave it to me. It was wrapped up in pink wrapping paper neatly folded around the white box which contained the shiny silver cross.

Being here in the grossness of the hospital only makes my back hurt from all the lumps in my bed. I keep changing the way I'm lying and the lumps are still poking into my back and it's painful.

"All I want right now is Nan," I think, and my eyes start to well up with tears wondering when she'll come.

Now there's a big knot in my back and all I want to do is scream and cry - my thoughts get interrupted by the loud burst of excitement as Nan erupts through the door. I shoot up out of my uncomfortable position sharply, too sharply, a rippling pain shoots through my spine. I wheeze and Nan rushes to my side, my chest feels tight and breathing, which used to be habitual, feels forced and painful.

Nan grabs a hold of my hand and relief pours over my body as I pant heavily.

"You're okay possum," she says in that voice that makes everything go back to normal.

I call the nurse in with the button beside my bed, it makes a sharp beep and I watch nurses flood in around me. They check the heart monitor that's connected to my upper arm and pour fluids into the drip on my hand. I'm trying not to cry. My whole body hurts. I slip back into the uncomfortable position and look up at the ceiling until the room stops spinning.

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My eyes blink open slowly to see Nan's face hovering above mine.

"Oh good, you're awake."

I breathe in sharply and place my hands behind me and shuffle so that I'm sitting up. My head is so deep in the upright pillows because I'm so weak, I can't hold my own body weight.

"Nan," I say.

"Yes darling," she says in a calming voice.

"What is happening to me?" I whimper.

"You're making your way to heaven, but it's lucky," she says.

"How is this lucky?" My hot tears roll down my face.

“Heaven’s much better than this stinky planet.” I chuckle through tears. “And possum,” she says, “I’ll meet you up there in no time. I promise.” Then she reaches forward and puts her hand on my head and kisses my forehead. I take a deep breath and my breath is shaky from crying; I open my eyes and reset.

Nan’s sitting on the end of the bed. She rummages through her bag and finds a box. She lays it out in front of me, playing cards.

“Let’s play solitaire,” she announces.

“Nan, that’s a one player game,”

“Yes well... Can we still play together though?” I agree and she says, “Very well then how do I play?”

I roll my eyes and explain it to her.

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I wake up again to my parents on either side of me. I almost choke, I honestly don’t want them there. They feel like strangers to me.

“Where’s nan?” I ask in a sheepish voice.

“She’s on her way,” Mum says.

My breathing feels heavy and I think Mum notices because she leans over and puts her hand on my forehead, and says “We should call the nurses in,” already reaching for the call button.

“No,” I snap at her, “Not until Nan gets here.”

I take the buzzer from her hand and place it in my lap. She looks disgusted and says, “Georgia, you’re burning up, we need to get a nurse in here.”

I’m trying to conceal my anger and not yell at her, but it’s a ticking time bomb until I explode. 5... 4... 3...- Nan erupts through the door, then Mum snatches the buzzer out of my lap and presses the button. I scowl at her, and as I do, nurses pour into the room. The nurse looking over me looks concerned and ushers my parents and Nan outside; they do as told. My grasp of Nan’s hand is released and I can’t help but cry, I sob and sniffle.

The nurses surround me and the consistent beep of the heart monitor is calming me in the craziness of the nurses. Eventually the commotion dies down and we are left with the beeping still ringing. Nan walks in looking bewildered and Mum and Dad follow behind crying, now more than ever.

Nan sits on the edge of my bed with her leg folded underneath her.

“Gorgie,” she says in a shaky voice. I gulp in anticipation for what's about to come. “You know how you had a month to live?” I nod along, knowing what she's about to say but wishing I didn't. “There's been some complications Gorgie.” Her voice breaks.

I take a deep breath. “How long do I have left?” I say shakily.

“A few more days.”

I bite my lip as tears roll down my cheeks and off my chin and into my hands.

“I hate for this to happen,” Nan says, crying with me. She grabs onto my hand and squeezes it tight.

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Every day that goes by feels slow, and honestly I can't tell if this is a good or bad thing. Then the day comes, the day I've been dreading.

Nan is on the edge of my bed and the storm is heavy and thick and surrounding me. Then Nan reaches for my hands. The storm fades out to a light rain. Then it happens, I close my eyes and everything stops; in what should be a sad moment, I still manage to smile, holding the hands of my favorite person. She's been telling me this whole time I'll be going to heaven just so she can meet me up there and I believe her.