

The Wait for The Inevitable

I stand frozen at the front of the wide corridor that leads to my biggest fear. My mum holds my hand tightly as she urges me to walk forward, each step building more and more tension throughout my body. The candles on the walls flicker in the darkness as I continue walking until I finally make myself look. I peer down at my Nonno's aged pale hand laying still inside my own from the glossy black casket. His body, now a lifeless coat of humanness lies inside. I try my best to focus on this feeling, as I know I will not get to hold onto it much longer. I take this time to go through the memories of our time together to distract myself from this painful reality for a moment. Each memory plays one after the other like a slideshow in my mind.

There was the cold winters day when we went out for a walk after it rained and how a mist clung to the air as we walked along the wet path. I remember following Nonno's light blue eyes as he slowly raised his head, drawn to the beautiful array of colours splashed across the sky, creating a rainbow. I remember how we stayed out long that evening sharing different stories of gleaming pots of gold and jewels found at the end of a rainbow if you followed it to the end. I remember his beautiful, calming voice filling the air as I heard for the first time the song 'Somewhere over the rainbow'. It soon became our song. I remember how he used to say that one day he would be just over the rainbow too. Only now I understand what he meant.

When I was 8, we built a swing out of some old blue rope and a light brown wooden plank, thick enough to hold me. I remember how he pushed me on the very first swing and I screamed in delight as the wind surrounded me as I swung higher into the leaves of the blossoming pear tree. Looking back at him, he smiled in response to my gleeful laughter as his thick snow-white hair tousled in the spring breeze. No matter what the weather was he was always wearing his favourite pair of black and yellow sandals with a t-shirt and shorts. What a beautiful day that was.

Then there was the day we sat staring out from the top window of his red brick house at the rain falling heavily, covering all the backyard in a glossy blanket, creating a pasty brown mud. He commented on the graceful way the rain danced across the windowsill, and how the droplets raced each other to the bottom of the frosted, cold glass. Then, the warm, indulging smell of Nonna's delicious, famous spaghetti and meatballs she was making just for me, began creeping up the stairs

from the kitchen. Back then, our biggest problem was making it down to the dining table in time for dinner before Nonna started yelling in Italian to hurry up.

I move on to the next memory of us walking down the narrow little foot path that led to what we used to call, “the mushroom park” because of all the bright orange mushrooms that crowded around the feet of the trees. He would tease me when I was too scared to go down the neon blue slide, in fear that I would go too fast, but he promised to catch me at the bottom in order to get me to face my fears. We used to run through the long green grass field next to the playground that held small yellow flowers called yellow bells. His favourite. His tanned skin always looked so warm in the sun and he always wore a wide smile on his face. He always saw the world in such a beautiful way.

Glimmering in my mind is the summer afternoon when we walked back from the market after he spoiled me with a bunch of new toys and said I could have whatever I wanted. Money meant nothing. His balance of kindness and cheekiness and how his old ‘dad jokes’ used to spice up family dinners.

Then there were the orange cumquat trees that hung over the neighbour’s fence. We would try to sneakily take some, and it would always turn out horribly wrong. We ended up running away laughing, holding the stolen fruit in our hands as the neighbour’s yelling dissipated behind us. We returned home to Nonna’s disapproving frown because of our bulging pockets that revealed our secret adventure. Nonno had always been my partner in crime.

As my mum’s hand touches my shoulder in a caring gesture, I am pulled out of my treasure trove of thoughts. I gently kiss his cold forehead and whisper my goodbye. “I love you Nonno”. Unwelcomed tears begin to leave my eyes. I hesitantly let go of his hand and walk with my head down back through the doors of the gloomy building while trying to replay the memory of him singing “Somewhere over the rainbow”. As my mind recalls the nostalgic melody, that is when it hits me. That is where he is - he’s not gone - he is just over the rainbow. Suddenly it’s like I can hear him singing:

“Where troubles melt like lemon drops away above the chimney tops - that’s where you’ll find me...”

In the end I had to face the inevitable, but despite this tragedy, I can always find peace in the memories.