

Perspectives



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Forgotten

Kate Turnbull

She stares blankly at me, her frail hand grasping the rusty doorknob. ‘It’s me’, I utter, only to be greeted by my own voice echoing through her empty house. Ricocheting off the walls decorated in pictures of loved ones and past times. ‘Don’t you remember me?’ I try again, but with little success. She appears to be searching her mind, looking for the impossible answer, the answer to so many things in her life that are now forgotten. I am nothing but a distant memory in her mind, a memory so faded she is no longer able to call upon it and remember.

Who is she? The girl appears no older than 15 and looks up at me longingly, almost lovingly, as though I’m meant to somehow recognise her. I clutch the door handle and remark quietly to myself how rusty and unused it has become. How long has it been since I last had a visitor? I contemplate closing the door, blocking out such discomfort, but then her face looks so familiar, and I can’t help but smile and think I should know her.

She smiles a sympathetic smile and suddenly I’m five again. Grandma and I are baking biscuits. Chocolate chip was always my favourite, while Grandma liked macadamia. She said it was the combination of soft dough and hard nuts that was a delight to her tastebuds. We would spend hours making dozens of biscuits and it wasn’t long before her house was full with the warm aroma of biscuit dough in the oven. While they baked I cleaned the wooden spoon the only way I knew how, while Grandma told stories of her childhood at boarding

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school and becoming a home economics teacher. Once they were ready we would sit on her veranda, a glass of milk in one hand and a biscuit in the other, enjoying our creations. I would look up at her and she would smile down at me.

I recognise her youthful face but her name escapes me. She looks uneasy standing there, and the old fool that I am dressed in my pink nightgown can't remember who she is. I reply to her remark of 'It's me' by diverting the awkward conversation and saying, 'If someone's going to visit they should at least phone in advance — it's good manners you know. I'm not dressed for visitors'.

Her hands fumble nervously at her granny-style floral nightgown, and just like that I'm seven. Grandma is showing me how to sew. Her creased hands guide mine, as we feed the patchwork fabric through the monster machine, which gobbles it up. Grandma is slowly rocking the pedal of the sewing machine as though she were tapping her feet to the beat of a song. Her gentle rocking giving life to my new pillowcase. I watch with amazement and repeat after her “spool”, “bobbin” and marvel at how she adds new thread from her endless array of colours. Every mistake I make, she corrects effortlessly. I keep trying to impress her and sew faster and straighter with the hope that one day I will be able to sew without assistance.

She seems to sense my uneasiness at the situation and turns to leave. I grab her quickly and give her a gentle hug. She appears shocked at the gesture, but I don't know what else to do. This young girl, no older than 15 has obviously visited me for a reason. What it is I will never know, but it just seems right to give her a hug. I stare into her deep aqua eyes, my eyes, and she returns the glance. Even though I feel intense guilt not knowing who she is, the girl seems to be content with the hug. She begins to walk away and I can't help but wish she would return and visit me again.

As I walk away from the house I begin to cry for all the things that Grandma has meant to me. Fifteen years of memories can't be written down, nor can they all be remem-

bered. She is the only grandma I really know, and I am her only granddaughter. I don't know why I don't tell her who I am, but somehow I don't think it matters. She wouldn't remember me next week or the week after, but I feel deep down that my visits make all the difference. Eighty-three years! I can't help but ponder what she has seen in her time, where she has been, who she has met. I wonder if she has enjoyed life? Did it all add up to now what is just a distant memory, almost forgotten? Perhaps all those moments and people have made her life worth it; perhaps she has meant something to all those people. All I know is that she means the world to me.



Kate Turnbull wrote this in 2008 when she was in Year 12 at Walford Anglican School For Girls in South Australia.