

Over the River and Through the Woods

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Made in Highland

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

A family of four sits in a car. The mom drives with the eldest daughter in the passenger seat. Her younger two, a boy, six and a girl, twelve, share the back row.

TWELVE
(fidgeting)
I'm nervous

MOM
(Not taking her eyes off
the road)
Don't be. It's just your
grandmother. There's nothing to be
nervous about.

MOM says this casually, but has a white-knuckled grip on the wheel. SISTER sees this and picks up where MOM ended.

SISTER
Don't be.
(Turning in her seat to look
at TWELVE)
She's super sweet and she's going
to love you. Promise.

TWELVE nods until SISTER turns back. Her brow wrinkles in thought.

BROTHER
I bet she's got white hair like
Timmy's grandma. She's super old
and covered with wrinkles!

MOM
(Laughing, tension easing)
Most grandparents are, and Grandma
is certainly no exception.

BROTHER
Well, I'm not nervous about
meeting her. I want to tell her
about first grade and my new
teacher and show her my tooth!

BROTHER turns to TWELVE and sticks his tongue through the hole in his mouth where his tooth was. TWELVE frowns and pushes him away. He laughs.

MOM
I'm sure she'll love to hear all
about it.

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TWELVE turns her head to look out the window. Tall trees get bigger and bigger as the family gets farther from the city. Huge cast-iron gates can be seen in the distance. TWELVE presses her nose to the glass and her breath fogs it up. Looming towers are reflected in her eyes.

MOM
LOOK, GUYS!

BROTHER
Why are there so many flowers?
They're everywhere! Can we plant
some?

SISTER
That's kinda hard to do in the
city. Where would they go- Oh!
Mom! Look at that windmill! It's
adorable, isn't it?

MOM
Everything here is beautiful, in
it's own way.

TWELVE still looks out the window, her breath on the glass. She looks at a large rectangular building made of old brick.

MOM
That's the clubhouse. We're going
to meet Grandma there.

They park and pile out of the car. SISTER is smiling excitedly. BROTHER bounces up and down and pulls on MOM's hand, dragging her to the doors. MOM is smiling, reserved. TWELVE is unconsciously still frowning, worrying her lip between her teeth.

SISTER
(Grabbing TWELVE's hand
and squeezing)
You'll love her.

TWELVE
I know that. But what if she
doesn't love me?

SISTER
She will. Promise.

The two sisters walk hand-in-hand into the building. Inside, MOM speaks quietly with the lady at the front counter, her words inaudible. Immediately, a NURSE comes out and takes them through double doors to a common space. TWELVE looks around. It looks like any retirement home/hospice greeting room.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

I was devastated last year when your mother visited and you weren't with her.

TWELVE

(sniffling)

I know. I'm sorry. My dad had us and we couldn't get away to see you.

GRANDMA

No matter. You're here now and look at you! You're so big you're practically grown!

TWELVE blushes and blinks back tears and GRANDMA brushes tears from her own eyes.

TWELVE

(Squeezing GRANDMA again)

I wish I could have met you sooner. You won't believe everything I've heard about you from Mom! Is it true you went skydiving for your sixtieth birthday? That's so badass!

MOM

Language!

TWELVE

(Blushing)

Sorry. I meant awesome.

GRANDMA

(laughing)

It's okay. Your mother had a worse mouth than that when she was your age. And I did go skydiving, but that was a very long time ago. This old bag of bones won't be doing anything of that sort ever again.

TWELVE

I want to be just like you when I-

BROTHER

(Bounding up and cutting her off)

Grandma! Grandma! I have a hole in my mouth!

(He sticks his tongue through it to show her)

GRANDMA

(Releasing TWELVE and turning to him)

You must be Cory. I'm so glad I finally get to meet you! Look at you! You're the man of the house now!

CORY

(Puffing his chest in pride)

I'm in the first grade now! I didn't like reading at first but I do now, I think. And Mrs. Carp—that's my teacher— she says I'm one of the best readers in the whole first grade!

GRANDMA

(Laughing)

In the *whole* first grade? That's wonderful!

SISTER

(Edging her way in)

Hi, Grandma.

GRANDMA

(Immediately embracing her)

Sara! My, you've grown. How old are you now?

SARA

Nineteen.

GRANDMA

(Clasping her hands together in delight)

And I'm sure you're going to a wonderful college!?

SARA

(Sheepish)

I got accepted into a bunch, but I'm actually taking some time off to travel.

GRANDMA

(Waving her hand)

Never mind that. I would have done the same if I had the option. I'm just happy you're happy.

SARA

(Nodding)

I am. I really am.

TWELVE backs out of the way of her family, smiling softly as their voices fade out and are replaced with music. MOM moves back in, her hands moving excitedly as she talks to her mom again.

TWELVE stands silently, watching her family talk to GRANDMA for the first time in years. After a moment of silence, she smiles widely.

NURSE returns and the sound suddenly does as well.

NURSE

Time's almost up. Just a warning.

CORY

(Hugging onto GRANDMA so tightly, she lets out an *oof*)

Bye, Grandma! See you later!

SARA

(Peeling CORY off GRANDMA)
Sorry about him. The pest doesn't understand personal space
(lovingly)

GRANDMA

(With a smile)
No matter.
(Leaning in to hug SARA)
Bye, Darling. I'll see you soon.
You better bring me lots and lots of photos of your travels next time.

SARA

(Hugging GRANDMA tightly)
I will. Promise.

MOM waits a moment for SARA to let go. She has tears in her eyes as she hugs GRANDMA one more time.

MOM

Bye, Mom. I'm going to miss you so, so much.

GRANDMA

I know. But I'll see you again soon, right?

MOM

I'm never missing another one of these days. I will be right here, everytime.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)
(She pulls herself away with
a sniffle)
I just wish it's not a full
year away.

GRANDMA
(Nodding)
I do, too.

TWELVE
(Moving her way in to
hug GRANDMA)
Bye. I'll miss you.

GRANDMA
(Hugging her again, tighter
this time)
I'll miss you, too, Bug.

NURSE
(Holding an arm out
to GRANDMA)
It's time to go, Irene.

GRANDMA
(Releasing TWELVE and
grabbing NURSE's arm)
It better not be another eight
years before I see you all again.

MOM
(Laughing tearfully)
It won't be. I swear.

The family begins walking to the front doors.

GRANDMA
(Calling to them from behind)
I love you!

MOM AND SARA AND CORY AND TWELVE
(Chorusing, singsong)
We love you, too!

It's obvious this is something they grew up doing. They all
laugh tearfully afterwards.
TWELVE trails behind her family, tears streaming down her
cheeks. The family climbs into the car and MOM puts it into
drive.
TWELVE turns to watch the buildings disappear through the
rear window.

SARA

See? I told you there was nothing
to be nervous about.

There is silence as MOM drive. A sign appears in the corner reading "Blackwood Cemetery Visitation Center". MOM drives a bit further and suddenly tombstones and mausoleums appear. Eventually, she stops the car and they all climb out. TWELVE is holding a single yellow rose. She walks to something tall, its shadow on her face. TWELVE places the rose on the ground and stands back up.

TWELVE

(Whispering)

Happy Death Day, Grandma. I'll see
you next year.

There's an engraving on the door of the towering mausoleum, reading "Irene Peterson, Beloved Wife, Mother, and Grandmother. Forever in our Hearts. Rest Eternally in our Love." A photo of GRANDMA is inlaid in the stone.

TWELVE wipes her tears and looks around at her family in the middle of the cemetery, each of whom are placing their own yellow roses at the grave before joining her. Around them, other families are scattered throughout, crying. A Nurse is helping a woman through the doors of her mausoleum, her family tearfully waving goodbye.

MOM first pulls SARA into a side hug, then TWELVE. CORY is burying his rose in the ground to make it stand straight up. TWELVE smiles through her tears as she watches him. She leans into her mom's hug and MOM's arm tightens around her.

FADE TO BLACK