

Over the River and Through the Woods

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INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

A family of four sit in a car. The mom drives with the eldest- Sara (19) in the passenger seat. Her younger two- a boy, Cory (6) and a girl, (12)- share the back row.

JANE
(fidgeting)
I'm nervous

Mom doesn't take her eyes off the road.

MOM
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. Sara sees this and picks up where Mom ended.

SARA
Don't be.

She turns in her seat to look at Jane.

SARA (CONT'D)
She's super sweet and she's going
to love you. Promise.

Jane nods until Sara turns back.

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

Mom laughs, the tension easing away.

MOM
Most grandparents are, and Grandma
is certainly no exception.

CORY
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!

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

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

Jane turns to look out the window. Tall trees grow bigger and bigger as the family gets further from the city. Huge cast-iron gates can be seen in the distance.

Jane presses her nose to the glass. Her breath fogs it up. Looming towers are reflected in her eyes.

MOM (CONT'D)

Look, guys!

CORY

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

SARA

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.

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

MOM (CONT'D)

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

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sara smiles excitedly. Cory bounces up and down and pulls on Mom's hand, dragging her to the doors. Mom smiles, reserved.

Jane unconsciously frowns, worrying her lip between her teeth.

Sara grabs Jane's hand and squeezes.

SARA

You'll love her.

JANE

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

SARA

She will. Promise.

The two sisters walk hand-in-hand into the building.

INT. CLUBHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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.

INT. COMMON SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jane looks around. It looks like any retirement home/hospice greeting room.

Nurses in white run around and families greet one another. The Nurse sits them on a couch and disappears. Sara still holds Jane's hand.

After a few moments, The Nurse returns with an old woman in tow. GRANDMA has white hair and wrinkles, but her eyes are very much alive and full of mischief.

Sara squeezes Jane's hand once more.

CORY	SARA
I told you she would have white hair!	Shhhh!

Mom stands and walks to Grandma

MOM (whispered, reverent) Mom?

GRANDMA (nodding) It's me.

Their eyes fill with tears and they hug each other tightly. They begin speaking over one another.

MOM	GRANDMA (CONT'D)
It's been so long-	I've missed you-

MOM (CONT'D)	GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Going on eight years now since you've seen my oldest, right?	I can't believe you never brought the younger two to visit me. I've been wanting to meet them ever since they were born-

MOM (CONT'D)	GRANDMA (CONT'D)
We've only just moved back-	I wish-

MOM (CONT'D) I know.

Jane stands hesitantly when it looks like they've finished.

JANE
(tentative)
Grandma?

Grandma turns to look at Jane. The two stare at each other for a moment before Grandma swoops Jane into a hug.

GRANDMA
Darling! I've been wanting to meet you for so long! I was devastated last year when your mother visited and you weren't with her.

JANE
(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!

Jane blushes and blinks back tears. Grandma brushes tears from her own eyes.

JANE
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!

JANE
Sorry. 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.

JANE

I want to be just like you
when I-

Cory bounds up and cuts her off.

CORY

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

He sticks his tongue through the hole to show her.

Grandma releases Jane and turns to him.

GRANDMA

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 puffs his chest out in pride.

CORY

I'm in the first grade now! I did
not 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!

Sara edges her way into the conversation.

SARA

Hi, Grandma.

Grandma immediately embraces her.

GRANDMA

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

SARA

Nineteen.

Grandma clasps her hands together in delight.

GRANDMA

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

I am happy. Super happy.

Jane 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.

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

The Nurse returns and the sound suddenly does as well.

NURSE

Time's almost up. Just a warning.

Cory hugs onto Grandma so tight she lets out an 'oof'.

CORY

Bye, Grandma! See you later!

Sara peels Cory off of Grandma.

SARA

(lovingly)

Sorry about him. The pest doesn't understand personal space yet.

GRANDMA

(smiling)

No matter.

She leans in to hug Sara.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Bye, Darling. I'll see you soon. You better bring lots and lots of photos of your travels next time.

SARA
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,
every time.

She pulls herself away with a sniffle.

MOM (CONT'D)
I just wish it wasn't a full year
away.

GRANDMA
I do, too.

Jane moves her way in to hug Grandma.

JANE
Bye. I'll miss you.

Grandma hugs her back, tighter this time.

GRANDMA
I'll miss you, too, Bug.

The Nurse returns, holding an arm out to Grandma.

NURSE
It's time to go, Irene.

Grandma releases Jane and grabs The Nurse's arm.

GRANDMA
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
 (From behind)
 I love you!

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

It's obvious this is something they grew up doing. They all laugh tearfully afterwards.

Jane trails behind her family, tears streaming down her cheeks. The family climbs into the car and Mom puts it into drive.

Jane turns to watch the buildings disappear through the rear window.

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

There's 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. Jane is holding a single yellow rose. She walks to something tall, its shadow on her face.

Jane places the rose at the foot of the mausoleum and stands back up.

JANE
 (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.

Jane wipes her tears. She looks around at her family in the middle of the cemetery, each of whom are placing their own yellow roses at the entrance before joining her.

Around them, other families are scattered throughout, crying.

A Nurse helps a woman through the front doors of her mausoleum, her family tearfully waving goodbye.

Mom first pulls Sara into a side hug, then Jane.

Cory buries his rose in the ground to make it stand straight up, oblivious to the tears behind him. Jane smiles through her tears as she watches him.

She leans into the hug and Mom's arm tightens around her.

FADE TO BLACK