

First Name Last Name

Class

Professor

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Memoir

The breeze feels unusually cool today. It comes and goes irregularly. The clouds above me are bright white and conceal the sun. I inhale. My throat feels sore from crying earlier. I repress a small cough, putting my gloved hand up to my lips. My cheek feels warm. I am at my grandfather's funeral. This moment is one that will change the way I see the world for years. It was an important moment for me, because it made me realize that my life is important, and the decisions I make now are important. It makes me feel sad remembering this period of my life, but it was also when I realized that I could be independent and completely in charge of my own destiny.

All of my relatives are around the graveyard. No one smiles. Their faces are flushed red, and several people have red eyes. No one wants to be too close to one another. Their eyes are around at other family members, trying to find any sign of weakness. The arguments they had earlier still resonate in the air. You can almost feel everyone's heart beating faster as they deal with their anger towards each other.

My fingers are playing with the candy wrapper. My grandfather loved these treats. He loved their sweet taste and hard crunch. I feel as though I will remember my grandfather every time I taste one of these candies. The thought feels weird in my mind. It's such an uncomfortable way of thinking. I realize now that I am staring at my future. The decisions I make now will stay with me forever. Everything feels as though it matters so much more now. Even the decisions I

make about the food I eat, or how I treat my body, mean so much. I only have so much time to live, and I need to make it count for myself. My family is important to me, and they must understand that I want to stay around for a while and be there for them when they need me.

My father and two aunts are standing close together. They will miss their father. Even though they are not his blood relatives, they really loved him. They knew his death was coming, but loss is never easy to accept.

My father looks out over the tombstones, a thoughtful look on his face. I think he has not slept much over the past few weeks. I wonder how well he is actually thinking at the moment. He seemed very tired this morning. He sat over his plate, his fingers slightly shaking when he attempted to move the food from the plate to his mouth. He didn't eat very much. It's not enough that his father just passed, but work has been very difficult for him. He has an advertising company, and his company realized that a risky decision they made earlier was not going to pay off for them.

My two aunts are very similar in personality. The older one is shorter, but a little plumpish. In contrast, the younger aunt is a little taller, with hollow cheeks. They sit next to my father on each side. They have always been close, and nothing has changed since they were children. They are married, but they convinced their husbands not to move too far away from each other.

I think my father may feel a little isolated from them. Although the three of them are close, the sisters found more in common with each other than they did with their brother. They know each other's secrets, and they were together when both of my cousins were born. They love each other so much. I remember last year when they found out that my aunt had to get a kidney transplant. My family was all very upset, because none of them were biologically related

to each other, so none of them could donate to her. My grandfather and grandmother were especially upset, because they felt that they could not provide for their children.

My grandmother sits in her chair next to the grave. She stares at the ground, but not at the grave. Her face looks tired. She has had to deal with everyone's questions and debates over the past few weeks. She knows the storm is coming when we leave the funeral. Until now, the rest of our relations have been politely offering their condolences. But at the same time, the questions have been coming in. Just small little questions, asking about what plans she had after her husband's death. Almost every condolence made sure to mention what a great man he was, and making sure to lightly mention the fortune he possessed. It had been a difficult time for my grandmother. Everyone was very nice to her, but they had glared at each other over her head, and especially at my father and his sisters. It was hard to watch this exchange happen, but I couldn't do anything about it.

As the family assembles around the tombstone, I look into everyone's face. I wonder who actually feels sad, and who just sees another business transaction. I wonder if perhaps I am just being pessimistic. I try to recognize what I even feel myself. Am I sad? Bitter? Maybe I just feel unready? Have I already recovered?

The family kneels down in front of my grandfather's tombstone. My grandmother gets down slowly. She must be in much pain. I feel like seeing her move is almost more painful than the knowledge that my grandfather is under the ground behind me. I cannot decide if looking or just knowing is the worst part of the funeral. It is time to kowtow to my grandfather. I watch everyone kowtow. Who takes it seriously and who is secretly happy inside with the burial, is the question that goes around in my head. My family has been fighting over the inheritance ever since the day my grandfather passed. I know especially that his brother has his eyes on the

inheritance, because he feels that he should be rewarded. They especially feel this way because they think that, since my father and his two sisters are not technically his biological children. He and his wife have been bugging my grandmother incessantly. But, she is firmly on her children's side, because she loves them just like she would any other children. They all spent time growing up together, and my grandmother firmly feels that they deserve the inheritance because they actually are their children.

When it is my turn to kowtow, I cannot stop crying. The memories of my grandfather keep circling in my mind. I take care not let any dirt on the tombstone. The wind whisks some of the dirt. No matter how much we advance as a society, we will always return to the most basic of human experiences. I am supposed to attend college in America in a few months. I will be far away from all of my family. This is supposed to be good for my future, but I am worried. I notice a change in the light and look up towards the sky. The warm sun has broken through the white clouds above.

I felt a tear start rolling down my face. I have started crying. Until now, I had almost felt unsure of what I was facing. I loved my grandfather, and all of my family, even if we do have our differences. At this moment, I realize that I am not stuck in the world. The decisions I make now are not necessarily ones that I am stuck with. Although I have graduated from high school and now go to college, I am free to do almost anything I want. I can let my grandfather's memory live within me, and I am able to do what I need to in order to make myself happy – just like my grandfather would have wanted.

I remember a moment with him when I was five years old. I was sitting in a flower patch near my grandfather's house. My family was visiting him. Everyone was inside. I was crying because I was feeling sorry for myself. The flowers around me were bright and seemed to be

growing healthily around me. They looked so beautiful. I worried that I may never feel the same way. Growing up felt so scary at the time. I wanted to stay as a small seed for the rest of my life.

Suddenly, I realized that my grandfather had walked out into the grass and was looking at me. I wiped off my eyes because I did not want to seem too sad in front of him. He bent over in the grass, but had to take his time. Even back then, his back hurt him so much. He reached out and took my hands. They are soft against my skin, and warm.

He looks me directly in the eyes. Truly, he has the nicest eyes of anyone I have ever met. He asks me why I have been crying, and that it has been making him feel sad and worried for me. I say that I'm not sure, "sometimes this is just how I feel about things."

I'm looking down, and he chuckles. He says that he does not know why I would ever feel that way. He says "You should never doubt yourself so much, you know? You have no reason to feel this sad about yourself. Do you know why? Because you are my beautiful little granddaughter. You are the kindest, sweetest person I personally know. You deserve to have the world handed to you. You deserve everything I can give you. So, please, wipe your eyes, young one." I remember how he helped me stand back up after this, and how he hugged me. I felt so loved by him. His breath, I remember, was sweet from the candy he always ate. As we walked back to the house, he offered me a piece to enjoy.

The sound of people shifting their weight in the grass behind me snaps me out of my reverie. I have been standing at the grave for a bit too long. I know my family is watching me. I need to join them. I clean the dirt on my grandfather's tombstone one more time. Some of it gets caught in the wind and blows away. I loved my grandfather, and he loved me. That is what I should remember, and that is what is going to give me strength as I face my future. I take a deep breath and turn around to face my future.