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Grandma's Secret



By Mrs. Paul E. King

GRANDMA'S SECRET

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The family left the graveyard, talking loudly, laughing and joking, just as quickly as possible after Reverend Brunner had finished his, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," committal. All, that is, except Jenny. She remained beside the grave and the casket, weeping softly but brokenly.

"Grandma! Oh, Grandma!" she cried, touching the inexpensive casket, within which satin-lined box were the remains of her beloved grandparent.

She tried to wrap her arms around the wooden box in one final parting gesture of love but collapsed, instead, in grief.

"Jenny. Jenny," the mortician said, softly-close to her ear. "Are you all right? Let me help you to your car, will you?"

"No, please, Milton," she said, addressing the mortician by his old familiar name, since they had known each other all their lives. "I can't leave. I loved her so."

"I know you did, Jenny. Everybody around here knows you did. But don't you think you should leave? Her children have gone, and so have all the other grandchildren. And her friends, too; what are left any more on this earth of them. One's long-time friends are fewer and fewer -- less and less -- when one lives to be as old as your grandmother was. Ninety-two is a wonderful age."

"Yes, Milt, it is. God favored Grandmother, I feel. Please, I want to stay until they've covered her casket with earth. I told her I'd stay with her to the very end."

"But you have, Jenny! You have!" Milt's voice sounded almost hoarse. "You were the only one who cared about her."

The only one who loved her. Since your mother died, I mean." "Please, Milt, don't. Don't talk that way."

"But it's true, Jenny; you know it's true. Everybody knows it's true."

Jenny sighed. She wiped the tears from her face and her eyes. "Like Grandma used to pray, so I quote, 'Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

Milt harrumphed, then he kicked a clod of dirt on the ground. "But they did know what they were doing, Jenny. They did! They're just a bunch of ingrates, that's what. A bunch of 'grabbers' and 'takers.' And your

grandparents never brought them up to be like that. I know this; know it as surely as I know I have a nose on my face."

"Money, Milt. Money. And prosperity. It makes some people greedy. Very greedy. Exceedingly greedy. That's why, after Grandpa died, Grandma gave the money so the church could be built."

"And that's when the real trouble began, too," Milt stated, with a note of sheer pleasure ringing in his voice.

Again Jenny sighed; more heavily this time. Then she said joyously, "But I'm so thankful Grandma did what she did. My, the stars she'll have in her crown! How many souls came to Jesus in those first six months; sixty-three, was it? Not to mention the ones that followed after that. And to think that her children, all except my mother, called it a 'waste of money.'"

"Well, we know differently, don't we, little Jenny? God alone knows where old Milt would be today had it not been for that church and the great revival meeting God sent to us under Brother Caster's powerful preaching and mighty praying. But what will become of you now, Jenny? You lost your husband years ago in the war, and the tiny little baby God sent to you right before your husband had to go abroad. You gave up your nursing profession to care for your grandmother, now what? Where will you go? What will you do?"

"I'll stay on in Grandma's tiny apartment, Milt, until I'm able to think straight, God willing. She paid the rent in quarterly installments. So I have three months, for sure, that I can live there. Meanwhile, I'll keep on praying. God will open the right door for me. I'd like to go back to nursing again, if this is His will for me. I'll take a brush-up course first."

"Sure you'll be all right if I leave now, Jenny? We have another funeral in a couple of hours, and I need to get back to the office before then." "I'll be fine, Milt, thanks."

"Shall I send my wife over to the apartment in case the 'vultures' descend upon it to 'comb' its insides and make sure there is no 'buried' treasure hidden within?" Milt asked with irony and a bit of humor.

"No, thanks, Milt. Grandma's will is, at this moment, I feel sure, being gone over with the proverbial 'fine-tooth comb.' She had some exquisitely fine pieces of cut glass and some small pieces of very lovely antique furniture, but, so far as I know, these are the only things of value that are left. So far as I am concerned, they may take them all. I loved Grandma, not for what she once had, nor for the few remaining objects in her little apartment, but because she was Grandma: a Spirit-filled, God-fearing, caring, kind and compassionate and unselfish woman."

"If you do need help, give Mildred a call; she'll be over immediately, Jenny."

"Thanks, Milt. I'm sure I'll be fine."

Jenny stood by the grave and watched as the grave diggers lowered the casket into the ground then pushed the dirt on top. when they had finished and were gone, she knelt beside the grave and asked the Lord for grace to face whatever may come her way before her three uncles and one aunt and their families left for their respective homes. Then she patted the spray of roses which rested on top of the earth and, with a softly-spoken, "I love you, Grandma," she walked to the car and drove to the apartment, feeling she couldn't stand to hear the joking and the laughter of the thoughtless relatives as they dined on the meal which the women from the church had prepared and were serving in a hall up town.

She called the pastor's wife as soon as she had let herself into the apartment, explaining that she felt she wanted to be alone and wouldn't be over for the meal.

"I'll see that you get something to eat, Jenny," Mrs. Bruncker told her kindly. "But I'll wait until after the relatives leave. They'll be over to the apartment, I heard one of your uncles say."

"I'm expecting them, Sister Bruncker. Please tell them to come whenever they're ready. I'm going to lie down and rest awhile. I feel quite tired and weary."

"You do that, Jenny. I'm sure you're very tired. We all love you and we're praying for you."

"Thanks, Sister Brunner. Thanks much. You are most kind."

"I think it's our Jenny who's kind," came the soft reply before the telephone receiver was put back into place.

Jenny had fallen asleep and was in the middle of a pleasant dream when the door chimes rang musically and awakened her. She hurried to the door and greeted her uncles and her aunt courteously, graciously and lovingly, asking softly where their mates were. She was thoroughly surprised to not see them there.

"We knew it would be too stuffy in here if everybody came," Aunt Edie remarked, looking around the apartment with an eagle eye.

"I suppose you've seen the will," Uncle Homer said, coming directly to the point.

"No, I haven't," Jenny stated kindly. "After all, I'm only a grandchild."

"So we know!" Uncle Homer exclaimed with a hint of sarcasm. "But it seems you have been left something. . . ." His sentence trailed.

Jenny felt her face flush. "I . . . I have?" she asked. "I loved Grandma; not her things," she said softly as sobs shook her slender shoulders.

"No need crying about it, Jenny; everybody's going to die sometime," Aunt Edie remarked, a bit more kindly than Jenny had heard her speak for a long time. "And after all, it's only that old sewing basket of hers that's to be yours; and the little rocking chair that was in her bedroom and a couple of dishes and her treadle sewing machine. I had hoped she'd give me the sewing machine, but she didn't, so I'll not fret about it. After all, it would only have collected dust in our house. You sew beautifully. I'm sure Mother took this into consideration. And as for that old frayed-looking sewing basket of hers, I think it's ready for the rubbish can. She had that thing so long as I can remember. It's been covered and padded with new material I can't tell you how many times. It's junk."

"Oh, no, Aunt Edie; I love it. It's held the buttons I used to play with when I was a child. And from its insides Grandma always found lace scraps

or fancy and colorful trim for my doll's dresses or hats. I love that sewing basket."

Aunt Edie laughed, actually laughed, then threw her hand outward with a grand flourish, stating, "What a legacy; a piece of junk! An old, long-ago worn-out sewing basket! How utterly out of place it would have looked in any of our homes!" she added, looking at her brothers.

"We wouldn't have taken it!" all three uncles exclaimed together loudly, as they began looking through the apartment, setting aside what few remaining objects met with their approval and leaving those intact that they had no desire for.

After they left, without so much as even thanking Jenny for caring for and looking after their aged mother, Jenny was amazed to find that almost everything in the apartment was still there. Two small pieces of furniture were gone and half a dozen cut glass dishes, but that was all. She looked around in awe and amazement. The remaining things were hers: They had told her so as they left.

She had wondered if she'd have a bed to sleep in, even, and God had seen to it that she had a bed and all the lovely extra things too! In reality, she had two beds -- two twin beds; she slept in one, her grandmother slept in the other. Oh, she was so very rich -- in having her grandmother's few remaining old but very sturdy and lovely things.

Seeing the sewing basket on the floor next to the rocking chair in which her grandmother sat to mend, darn, and crochet or knit -- the chair which was now hers by her grandmother's will -- Jenny rushed over and picked up the much-worn basket and hugged it to her, allowing her tears to moisten its faded, quilt-stitched, cloth-covered top and sides. With tender and loving hands she opened the lid and gently fingered the yarn and the fabric scraps, the lace pieces and the brightly colored trim. She felt she had a treasure. With gentle hands she caressed the inside "wall" of the old sewing basket, deciding that, just as soon as her emotions could take it and stand it, she would redo the entire basket -- inside and out -- just like she had seen Grandmother do it.

She stroked the "wall" lining a second time, ever so gently, and her fingers felt a hole. Removing the scraps of this and that and the few balls of

soft yarn, the button box with its fascinating treasure of buttons, and the scissors and pin box, Jenny surveyed the hole, afraid that it would become larger and longer.

She took hold of the fabric, handling it very carefully lest more damage should come to it, when her fingers felt a paper. What was it? she wondered, as she worked the paper carefully through the hole and held it in her hand.

For a long while she held the paper, looking at it then pulling it to her bosom, knowing it was a message of some kind from her beloved grandparent, for no one but Grandmother ever used the basket. Finally, she opened it. There, in Grandmother's familiar and neat handwriting, she read:

My precious granddaughter, Jenny --

This is a very special love-note to you from one who knows God gave her the best granddaughter in all the world. I love you, my child, in a very special way -- the same way in which I know you love me. Your love is genuine and real -- both for our wonderful Lord and for me.

Now Jenny, I want you to know that I have not left you destitute and penniless; not at all. I have bequeathed this old sewing basket to you simply because I knew no one in my immediate family would want it and, too, because I knew it would make a safe little repository for your inheritance. Inside the firm oval "wall" of this basket, between the inner and outer "wall" -- or shell, whichever you choose to call it -- is your inheritance from me -- in both cash and bonds. Every dollar of it is yours. You will have to "tear" the basket apart, like I did each time I recovered it with new fabric. (It needs recovered badly again, my dear.)

This is my love-gift to you. I knew my money-hungry sons and my daughter would make sure that you received nothing if I had put it in the bank; so I decided upon the little "vault" between the outer and inner shell of the basket as my secret bank. You may begin using this immediately if you need to. However, I have hidden some money for you inside the bobbin box in the second drawer on the left side of the sewing machine. This is enough to see you through for nearly five months -- or more, even. Including paying the rent for this small but cheerful apartment, Jenny.

Work only if you want to, my dear. It will not be necessary for you to do so, however: I have seen to it that you are well taken care of.

Stay close to Jesus, Jenny. (I know you will.) Soon we will be together again in Heaven. Oh, won't we have a glorious time together! And please pray much for my backslidden sons and my daughter, and their families. God can even yet bring them down from their haughty pinnacles and bring them back to Himself.

I love you, Jenny, very much,
Grandma.

Jenny wept. Folding the paper like her grandmother had folded it, she slipped it carefully back into its place of hiding, smoothing the fabric back in place as much as possible. Then she filled the basket with its original contents and put the lid on it and set it beside the chair again. She couldn't bring herself to peeking, even, between the two "walls." Not yet. No, not yet. She would go to the bobbin box when she needed food money or when she needed to pay a bill.

Suddenly overcome with the greatness of God's care for His children -- her especially! -- she threw her hands and arms upward and, weeping for joy, she had a Hallelujah meeting of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.