

Three Day Trip

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“Rose Mills,” my mother said to the nurse sitting behind the desk.

“Through this door and right around the corner,” she replied back.

One by one we entered; I was first. Peeking around the corner I saw something I would never have imagined. Curled up, falling off the bed, drooling, coughing, not being able to breathe, wheezing; there was this gurgling noise coming from inside her lungs. My nana sounded like a coffee maker; you know that noise it makes towards the end of the making, that’s what she sounded like. Then twitching: she started to twitch and in that twitch she opened one eye and looked at me. That was all it took and I went to the back of the line behind my sister. The next few hours we all sat around and watched her helplessly. The next few hours were filled with nothing but muffled cries and nose blowing with not much talking.

This was us, my family, brought together by my dying nana. We sat around her for hours just looking at each other with saddened eyes. My aunt and cousin were there three days before my sister, mother and I arrived; they hadn’t left her side. Hours passed before my sister and I were given the option to sleep at the hospital with everyone else or go back to my nana’s house. Both options were not my favorite but I wanted to sleep somewhat comfortably so my sister and I decided to go back to my nana’s house for the night.

We walked up the stairs slowly and opened the door to my nana’s house. We stepped through the door, surrounded by her. Her pink flowered curtains that hung; she made them with her poor bent over arthritis hands. In the kitchen there wasn’t much; Nana was never that much of an eater. Her ashtray still had ash and ends of cigarette butts in it; she wasn’t supposed to smoke but would she listen to us or her doctors? No. My sister and I made our beds and decided it was time to go to bed and get ourselves ready for tomorrow.

Tomorrow came too quick and my sister and I were back on our way to the hospital to see my nana. When I walked through the door I could hear my nana. I could hear her gasping for air; she wanted it so badly. Today was worse than yesterday and I didn’t want to see her for a whole day again. Today is when my aunt made the decision to take her off everything but her pain medicine. Now she gasped even harder for air, harder each time it seemed. Today we talked to her, too.

“Why won’t you leave us?” everyone asked.

“It is okay for you to leave Nana, we are all here with you,” I told her.

“Please just leave,” we begged her, we all knew she was in pain.

We all cried harder knowing that she was going to leave us today. Silently we sat looking at each other; touching and talking to my nana, letting her know we were all there with her. By the end of the day we were in a private room with my nana, we thought tonight would be the end.

“I love you,” I told my nana as I leaned over her and kissed her head before I left for the night.

I opened the door today and to my surprise there she was with everyone sitting around her. Now her coffee making noise had stopped for the most part; that’s because her lungs were just about full now. Nana’s brother John showed up for a little while but was soon gone. Finally I couldn’t take it, she couldn’t breathe, her mouth was dry as the desert and dropped open; I cried.

I left the room for ten minutes and something made me go back there. I walked down the hallway and walked into my nana’s room. I turned and looked at her; in that moment she took her last desperate attempt for air and was gone. GONE. Right in front of me I saw my nana die. She turned as cold as steel and her color just washed out of her. I have never seen anybody die until that day April 8, 2004, nine days before my 17th birthday. It was like my nana had waited to die until I was back in that room; why? My mother and aunt sat on each side of her holding my nana’s hands crying loudly, screaming not wanting to let go of my nana. The nurse came in and pulled the blanket over my nana’s head and that was the end of that. It was the end we had all been waiting for but didn’t want to come.