

Merry Christmas, Grandma

I stared at the house. “I know this place.”

Suzanne stood beside me. “I know.”

We walked through the door and into a party. Mistletoe hung from several doorways. A hand-sewn elf stood on a miniature ladder that ran up the side of the Christmas tree, a small ornament in his hand. Behind the tree, garland ran across several picture frames and door jambs. Cloves and pine wafted in the air along with the sweet smell of ham.

Noel reverberated throughout the house accompanied by several guests. The clinking of glasses punctuated the singing. Amidst the noise I heard my grandmother’s voice ring out in laughter.

I froze.

My grandmother didn’t actually laugh. Not a full belly laugh like I just heard. I remember once asking my mom why she called her mother ‘mother’ and her father ‘dad.’ She said “because she’s always been a ‘mother’ and never a ‘mom.’”

I looked at Suzanne, afraid to hope. She smiled and nodded.

I knew from experience to keep my excitement under wraps. I took a moment to calm myself before following my grandmother’s voice into the kitchen. She stood over the stove stirring a pot. The house looked and felt the same, except for the joy emanating from my grandmother.

I leaned against the wall and simply watched.

She looked younger than I remember, although I hadn’t seen her in over ten years. Some of her friends gathered around the table munching on appetizers. A woman next to the stove whispered something and my grandmother laughed and teased her. Then her eyes found me and sparkled with life. “Bella! I didn’t know you were coming!” She bustled past the table and pulled me into a hug. It was the first time I remember her hugging me like this and I held on.

She practically glowed when she stepped back to look at me.

I smiled. She really had changed. “It’s time Grandma.”

“Time?”

Suzanne stepped up next to me and held out her hand. “You’re ready now.” My grandmother hesitated a moment before slipping her hand into Suzanne’s. When their hands clasped, the people and party evaporated leaving the three of us standing in a fog of white. I watched Suzanne lead my grandmother somewhere I couldn’t see and couldn’t go.

My grandmother gasped, “It’s just like I imagined it would be!”

I smiled, closed my eyes and focused on my physical body.

I opened my eyes back in my bed and looked over at the Christmas tree in the other room. “Merry Christmas, Grandma.”