

## Gran's Here

I've never been to a funeral before. Mum said I didn't have to come. She went on and on about what if I get upset and how everybody would be crying and how dreadful it will be when they put Gran's box in the hole in the ground. I haven't cried yet. Mum's on her third tissue. I think Dad stuffed most of the boxful in his pockets...just in case. I wanted to come anyway because I know Gran would want me to. In any case I wasn't going to stay at home while Shaun came. He's been snivelling a bit too. He doesn't think I noticed. Mum thinks I'm being funny with Shaun because I won't sit up close to him. She keeps trying to push me along the pew, but when we stood up to sing the hymn I sat down closer to her and made a bigger gap. I've got that feeling she's cross, but she doesn't understand.

I think the minister's going to go on for ever with these prayers. I'm glad it's sunny today for Gran. I think it must always be sunny in heaven. Gran will like that. We often used to sit in the garden in the sun. Gran always wore a floppy white hat and talked about all the flowers she grew and the birds which came down to eat the nuts and bread. I think the birds liked her too. She was so kind. That's what the minister said about her. He went on a bit then too but he did say some nice things about Gran.

I wonder if Gran's listening. 'Go on with you, vicar,' she'll be saying, 'You don't need to tell them all that.' There was lots he said about Gran I never knew. He said she used to teach the children in the Sunday school. That's why she told me the Bible stories. She really did make them interesting. She should have taught the minister. He makes them so boring. But he wasn't boring just now. He did say some nice things. But then Gran always said nice things about him, except that time when he nearly sold her best coat at the Jumble Sale. She'd only taken it off for a minute to try something else on. Amen. Oh no, I thought that was the end, but he's started saying another one now. I bet Shaun's not listening. He's spread out a bit more. I'll have to push Mum up again.

'I'm not fidgeting, Mum.' I just have to keep the space. Perhaps I'll tell her why afterwards. I bet angels fidget in heaven, especially if there's lots of long prayers. I can't believe Gran's in that box. It really is beautiful..so shiny....especially the handles. That's odd though. It's got all those handles on but nobody uses them. Those men in black just picked the whole box up and put it on their shoulders. Gran would laugh to think six men in black coats were carrying her up the church on their shoulders - and in a box ! I wonder if she is laughing now. She'll be sad I expect because she's had to go away and we're crying.

I wonder why they put dead people in shiny boxes. When I asked Mum she said, it was like giving them back to God as a present. But that can't be right. Gran told me that when we die we leave our body behind because we don't need it anymore in heaven. She said it's just a worn out bit of us to get rid of. So it doesn't seem right to give God a present of the worn out bit we don't want anymore. If I had a present all nicely wrapped up and then found it was someone else's old worn out clothes, I'd really be hurt. And why put rubbish in a beautiful box. I heard Dad say it will cost a fortune. Anyway, we always put the worn out stuff in bin bags. No, I wouldn't want those men to carry Gran in a bin bag.

When Jerry, my hamster died, Dad just wanted to tip him into a hole under the apple tree, but I made a special box for him out of some old cardboard. I wrapped it up in pretty paper with flowers on it and tied it up with a pink ribbon. I hope he knew. Mum said there would have to be different heavens for people and animals because she couldn't live with mice running all round heaven. I think it will be different though. Mouse angels will be nice and kind, and they'll have big wings to stretch out and cover their tails. Mum says it's their tails she doesn't like. Perhaps angel cats will get on with angel mice all right. I hope my hamster's forgiven Mrs. Richard's cat.

Thank goodness, the last Amen. We're going to sing the other hymn now. It'll give me another chance to make the gap between me and Shaun bigger again. I don't feel like singing so I'm not opening my book. Mum's got hold of my hand. She either thinks I'm going to cry, or she's going to stop me pushing her up again. I've given her hand a squeeze. Oh dear it's made her cry. I didn't do it hard either.

I wonder if Gran's singing with us. She liked singing. She was always singing hymns and old songs. The vicar said she used to be in the choir. I don't remember that. Perhaps her voice broke or something and she had to leave - like Kevin Oakes. I think I heard that there are choirs in heaven - Oh yes, of course, choirs of angels, like in the Christmas story. They're supposed to play harps too. I wonder if Gran's learning to play a harp. Perhaps Granddad's teaching her! He's been there long enough to learn. Gran said she thought he'd be tired of waiting for her. Maybe it won't be a good idea for Granddad to teach her. She told me how he tried to teach her to drive the car once. He won't be able to say those words in heaven. I do hope he'll be pleased to see her. God is so wise, I don't expect he'll let dads teach mums anything in heaven.

I wonder if Gran knows what I'm thinking. Can she see everything I do? Everything! Oh dear! But then she can't tell anybody.. except the angels and she'll have a laugh about it with them. Gran wouldn't snitch on me to God....I'm sure of that. She never told Mum half what Shaun and me got up to. I wish Shaun would keep to his bit of the seat. He keeps sitting in the gap and I can't push Mum anymore. She's let go my hand now. We're at the end of the hymn. The men in black are picking Gran up again. I told Mum I'm going to stay here while they go and put Gran in the hole. I want to be on my own. Well not really on my own.

They're all following Gran now. I do hope she can see, although she wouldn't want to be so important. She'd rather be at the back. She must have felt terrible in that great shiny car. It was good though. I saw Rosie Brown when we came past her house. She didn't see me. I was just going to wave when Mum glared at me. She always knows what I'm thinking of doing. That's clever really I suppose.

They've all gone now. It's lovely and quiet with the organ playing so softly. Now it's just me and Gran. Hello Gran, I've tried hard to keep the space for you. You remember how you told me to. You said I mustn't forget it will only be your worn out old body in the box, and really you'll be sitting next me. I wish I could see you, but I *do* feel you're close. You said I had to laugh and not cry. I'm not going to cry, but I'm sorry I don't feel like laughing, at least not out loud. I can hear you say, 'I love you Laura', and I've got tears and laughs all mixed up inside me. The organist is coming now. Love you too Gran. For ever.