

GOODBYE GRANDMA (For Boys)

My grandma's leaving today. She's going to live in a nursing home. Mom's taking her there. Mom tells me it's for the best, that Grandma will get good care there - but I heard her tell Dad that this is the hardest thing she's ever done in her whole life. Grandma isn't like she used to be. When I was a little kid, Grandma played games with me. When I played games with my brothers, I always lost, but when I played with Grandma, I always won. We played Old Maid and Go Fish and a special game that she made up just for me, called Kevin's Game. We both promised never, ever to teach it to anyone else and I never did. We used to bake cookies together, too, and she'd let me really help, not just watch. I got to break the egg into the bowl and chop the nuts and mix the dough. I even got to put the cookie sheets in the oven. Then we'd eat warm cookies and drink milk and talk about neat stuff like how snakes get a drink of water.

It isn't like that anymore. Grandma can't bake cookies because she doesn't remember how. She doesn't remember lots of things, even important things like who I am. How can she forget that? I'm Kevin, her youngest grandchild! But sometimes she calls me Bill and I know she thinks I'm Uncle Bill, my mother's brother. Mom says Grandma has a brain disease and she can't help behaving like she does and that we must be patient with her and take care of her. I try to be patient, but it isn't always easy. One day she took my new radio out of my room and carried it out to the back yard and left it there, in the rain. My radio was ruined. I know she didn't do it to be mean, but still, it was hard not to be mad at her. When I think how Grandma used to be and how she is now, I feel all sick inside.

Grandma will be safe at the nursing home, Mom says. And the people there are trained to do things like get her dressed and give her a bath. I wouldn't want anyone getting me dressed or giving me a bath.

Grandma has to wear diapers now—just like a baby. I would hate that! I don't know if Grandma hates it or not, because she can't talk much anymore, and when she does talk, it doesn't make any sense; it's kind of a jabber.

She used to tell me neat stories. She made up a character named Mighty Kevin who looked just like me. Mighty Kevin had wonderful adventures. He could make himself invisible—a talent he got from eating fresh vegetables. Mighty Kevin once saved a dog from drowning and he put out a forest fire all by himself. He even went along on one of the space shuttles and helped the astronauts find their way back to earth.

Of course, Might Kevin also kept his room clean and helped his mom do the dishes and never goofed off in school. I never minded those parts because the rest of the stories were so exciting and because Mighty Kevin was always smarter and stronger than his brothers were.

My grandma is leaving today...but my real grandma, the one who played games and baked cookies and told me Mighty Kevin stories, is already gone. She left—a little bit at a time—and do you know something? I really miss her.