

Never Could Say Goodbye

A summer Sunday. Twelve-year-old HARRIET is helping her best friend Ayesha to clear out her grandfather's garden shed while he is out for the day playing golf.

HARRIET: Smells of damp wood in there. All those dried up pots of paint. He must be a busy man your Grandad. Old brushes, rusty nails, jam jars full of goodness knows what. What's it you call someone who saves things? A hoarder that's it, your Grandad's a hoarder. They say a lot of men get like that after a certain age. Can't bear to part with stuff, even when it's of no use to them or anyone else any more. When he comes home he won't know what's hit him. He won't be able to find anything; even when we've got it all organised. He'll complain, you watch, he'll prefer the clutter.

(HARRIET sits down on a homemade garden bench close to the shed)

My Grandpa's shed was the same... only more cobwebs. The spiders were everywhere. All shapes and sizes. He called his garden shed his special place. Never could say goodbye to anything. When we used to go and visit him and it was time to go home, he'd disappear. We'd kiss Gran goodbye and ask where Grandpa was and he'd have nipped to the shop or taken the dog for a walk. The last night at the hospital, when we all knew it was time to say goodbye, he whispered some excuse to see the nurse. We all had to wait outside. She came out and said he'd fallen asleep and that visiting time was over so we might as well go home. Well he died that night. He'd managed to avoid saying goodbye to the end. He'd been an evacuee in World War Two. Gran said he'd shouted goodbye to his mother from the train as she waved him off. He went to live in the countryside. Sent letters home of course and got letters back. That's how it was for all of them. Then he got told that he couldn't go back home because, well, there was no home to go to. My great Gran and Gramps adopted him. He didn't see his real

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parents again. Gran says that when he was grown up with his own family, he was a bit embarrassed about being abandoned and he'd always had this thing about saying goodbye – just couldn't bring himself to say it again... ever.

(HARRIET looks back at the shed, deep in thought)

You know Ayesha, I think we should put all your Grandad's stuff in some bin-liners, let him sort through them when he gets back...

by Nick Teed