

## **Bittersweet**

Her shoes always made that funny click-clack noise on the floor when they came to the hospital. His shoes didn't make the click-clack noise, they squeaked on the shiny floor.

His Gran was tall, and the big bird on the top of her hat frightened him. The red handbag she always took with her seemed to contain everything he could ever want. If he was hungry, there'd always be some chocolate in that bag. If he had a runny nose, there were always tissues.

“Come along, Neville, and stop scuffing your shoes!”

His Gran was scary sometimes. But he did as he was told, and walked properly, careful to lift his feet high above the ground to stop the leather scuffing on the floor.

He didn't like coming to the Hospital, but Gran said that they had to. She told him that even though his Mummy and Daddy were poorly, they still liked to see him. He didn't understand why his Mummy and Daddy were in hospital. He wished they could live at home with him and Gran.

They were almost there now. Neville knew which room they were going to; it was number ninety-two. His Gran had taught him how to count to one hundred last year.

Gran pushed open the heavy door, and he walked through it, into the big, sunny room. There were his Mummy and Daddy, sitting on the white beds. Neville thought his Mummy was very pretty – she had big blue eyes and long, shiny, yellow hair. Looking at his Daddy always made Neville laugh, because he had a big nose. Sometimes, when his Gran was talking to the lady in the bright green dress, he would climb onto his Daddy's bed and squeeze his big nose. And then Neville would get scared that his Daddy would wake up from his daydream and be cross with him.

But today, Neville knew they'd really come to see his Mummy. Gran had told him that it was Mothers Day today, and that his Mummy would love it if they took her some flowers. Neville had chosen the pretty red and yellow flowers from the shop.

The lady in the green dress came into the room.

“Good morning, Augusta,” the lady said to his Gran, “how are you?”

“Tired, Mary,” his Gran replied, “raising a kiddie at my age isn't easy.”

“Poor little mite,” the lady said, and she looked at Neville, “growing up without his Mum and Dad.”

Neville frowned. What did the lady mean? His Mummy and Daddy were right here. Couldn't she see them? He ran over to the lady and tugged on the sleeve of her dress.

“Excuse me, but my Mummy and Daddy are here. I'm not growing up without them, can't you see?”

The lady smiled at him. “Yes, and your Mummy and Daddy love you very much. Now, how about I put these flowers in a vase for your Mummy?”

Neville nodded, and then looked up at his Gran. Her eyes were shiny.

“Why are your eyes shiny, Gran?” he asked, “Are you poorly too?”

His Gran smiled, “No, dear. Now why don’t you go and sit with your Mother for a bit? I need to talk to the Healer about something.”

Neville nodded, and walked slowly over to the bed his Mummy lay in. She was sitting up, resting on a fat pillow, staring outwards. He pushed an orange chair to the side of the bed, and climbed up on it, using it as a way of getting onto the bed.

He sat down next to his Mummy on the white sheet, and touched her arm. She turned and looked at him, her pretty blue eyes staring blankly.

“Hello, Mummy,” he said, “It’s Mothers Day today, and so Gran said we should come and visit. We brought you some pretty flowers, look,” he pointed to the vase on the table next to the bed, but his Mummy didn’t turn and look.

“Okay then, maybe you’ll look when we’re gone. Shall I tell you about what I’ve done this week? Gran took me to the zoo on Monday. I saw lions and tigers and elephants and monkeys and giraffes and penguins and...and...those stripy horses. Gran bought me an ice-lolly and then we went and watched the sea lion show. I think when I grow up I’m going to work at the zoo. What do you think, Mummy?”

His Mummy didn’t say anything, but in his mind, Neville imagined that she’d agreed with him and smiled.

“And guess what Mummy!” he said, his face lighting up with excitement, “When we got back from the zoo, I asked Gran if I could have a pet, and she said maybe I’d get one for my next birthday! Do you know how old I’m going to be when it’s my next birthday, Mummy? I’ll be seven! Gran said I could have a birthday party. I wish you could come to my birthday party, Mummy. Maybe if I ask the lady in the green dress she’ll let you come. And Daddy too.”

Neville liked talking to his Mummy. At home, his Gran didn’t like it if he talked too much, she often said to him ‘Children should be seen and not heard!’ But when he came to visit his Mummy, she never told him off for talking too much.

“I read a book the other day, Mummy, all by myself! It was called Peter and Jane. Maybe next time I’ll bring it so I can read it to you and Daddy. I painted a picture the other day, too. Gran pinned it to the wall in the kitchen. She said that-”

“Neville!” his Gran called his name from outside the door, and he sighed. She never let him stay too long with his Mummy and Daddy.

“Coming Gran!” He called back, and carefully climbed down from the bed and onto

the orange chair.

“Goodbye, Mummy. Have a nice Mothers Day. I love you.” He kissed his Mummy’s cheek, and then jumped down from the chair, his shoes squeaking on the shiny floor as he ran towards his Gran.

**A/N: This was originally written for the Mothers Day fic challenge on The Hogwarts Experience.**