

Ursel Scheffler

Butterfly Message

Since Grandma has passed away
Niclas spends a lot of time with his granddad.
He lives in a small house outside the town.
But the house seems to be sooooo big and empty
without grandma!
That's why Granddad is enjoying Niclas's visits a lot.
They play crazy games together,
like building an igloo in the back of the garden in winter
or a pirates' nest in the cherry tree in summer time.

It is autumn now. The harvest has been brought in.
What a great time for kites!
Granddad and Niclas build a dragon with a long tail.
"He needs a name!" says Niclas.
"Let's call him Nepomuk," says Granddad.
"That was the name of our little dog."
It makes him sad to think about the old days. He turns around and pushes
his bike out of the shed.

It is only a short bike ride to the fields behind the orchards.
There is a strong wind and the kite shoots up in the sky like a rocket.
Some minutes later Nepomuk hovers between clouds
which have the shapes of elephants, sheep and whales.

"Do you think Grandma is watching us from behind the clouds?
She was always happy, when we were having fun!"
"I think so," says Granddad. "Do you see this butterfly?
I'm sure it is bringing us a message from Grandma."
"That's probably right," answers Niclas. "Grandma always sent postcards
when she was away."

Niclas looks up in the sky.

"Don't you think that the clouds look like Grandma's potato-fritters?"

"Oh yes! We always had them with apple sauce!" recalls Granddad.

"Now that you mention it, it seems to me that Grandma is standing beside us in her favorite red cardigan with little spots of apple sauce on the sleeves."

"But she is invisible," says Niclas.

"Invisible like our thoughts and feelings. But the invisible things are as important as the things we can touch and see," says Granddad.

"Like the air. We cannot live without air," says Niclas.

"Or love and friendship," says Granddad.

"Yeah, and dreams. We cannot touch dreams either," says Niclas.

After a while the wind slows down and the kite loses height.

Then it begins to shake and finally gets caught in the branches of an apple tree.

"Wait! I will get Nepomuk down for you!" says Granddad.

He takes the ladder that is leaning on a nearby garden shed.

"It's my neighbour's, he won't mind if I use it," murmurs Granddad as he climbs up into the tree.

The branch of the tree is not very strong.

"Be careful!" shouts Niclas.

But the rotten branch breaks

and Granddad falls - head over heels - to the ground like a ripe apple.

"Granddad!" cries Niclas. But there is no answer.

Is Granddad dead? Oh no! Thank god he's moving his arm!

"Take my mobile. Call the ambulance! 112," whispers Granddad before passing out again.

Niclas dials the number.

"An accident! My Granddad fell from a tree. Please come quickly!"

"Where are you and what's your name?" asks the man on the emergency line.

"I am Niclas. And my Granddad is lying in the orchard!" He describes the place.

"Stay where you are! We will be with you in a few minutes!" says the voice on the line.

Five minutes later (which seemed more like five hours to Niclas) the boy hears the signal of the ambulance.

An emergency doctor examines Granddad.

"Seems his leg is broken. We have to take him to hospital," he says after a while.

"Can I come with him?" asks Niclas.

"Of course. Jump in the car and buckle up!"

"Please call my daughter and tell her where we are!" says Granddad as the orderly pushes the stretcher into the ambulance.

"Do you think Granddad is going to die, too?" asks Niclas, when his Mum picks him up at the hospital later in the afternoon.

"No, darling! The doctor said his leg will be put in a plaster cast. He has to stay a few days in hospital. Afterwards he will be alright again."

"And I can come and see him?"

"As often as you like."

Niclas visits his Granddad every day.

Granddad is allowed to go outside and Niclas pushes his wheelchair.

"I will get some ice cream for the three of us!" says Niclas's Mum.

"But don't let Granddad climb any trees while I'm away!"

Granddad giggles. "Do you think I'm already strong enough for a new adventure?"

He looks at Niclas with a twinkle in the eye.

And Niclas knows that everything will be fine soon...

When Granddad is back home again, he cannot walk as easily as before. He tends to get dizzy. So the doctor tells him to use a walker when he goes for a walk.

"It's my racing car, my "shopping-Porsche"!"" says Granddad and laughs. "Lets drive to the Supermarket!"

As long as the "shopping-basket" is empty, Niclas is the pilot and Granddad pushes him along the street.

It's not before long Granddad is able to walk without his walker and he and Niclas make plans for new adventures.

"Could we build a tepee and make a campfire like we did on my birthday?" asks Niclas.

"Great idea! In a few days is full moon. This will change my garden into a magic prairie and we could have a great Indian campfire with a barbecue!"

They stop at the bench under a chestnut tree.

"I'll get some chesnuts for you!" says Granddad.

"Good heavens, no!" cries Niclas.

"Don't be afraid: I don't want to climb trees anymore.

I'll knock them down with my walking stick."

Niclas climbs up on the bench and picks some of the shiny chestnuts himself.

"How pretty they are", says Niclas, as he peels them out of their green jackets.

"Autumn is a wonderful season," says Granddad.

"There is a butterfly on your shoulder!" cries Niclas. "Next to your ear!"

"Be quiet," whispers Granddad smiling. "It has a secret message for me!"

"From Grandma?"

"Yes, it is saying that Grandma thought I would be joining her when I fell from the ladder.

"You mean: join her in heaven?"

Granddad nods. "But now I know I can stay with you a little longer."

"Will you send butterfly- messages for me when you are in heaven?"

"Later, much later, I hope!" says Granddad. "But at the moment I prefer to send you postcards and E-Mails. Or just take you in my arms like I'm doing right now."

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