The Tea Set

Arielle K.

Sunlight dimmed over the edge of the harbour, sending a flick of light bouncing off the horizon. I stood there silently, watching the sunrise. Hoping my Nonna was looking down on me while being lifted up into the sky.

I went inside the house, leaving my shoes on the stool next to our vibrant blue front door. I hung my coat on the hook next to the tinted window before making my way over to the kitchen. I opened the very top cupboard, standing on my tiptoes.

I took out the ancient china tea set with beautiful flowers drawn all over it with a vibrant blue marker. And took out a teabag with sweet scented magnolia petals in it, Nonna's recipe. The kettle beeped, like it always did when it was done boiling the water. It beeped again, then again, like a song. Nonna used to call it the teapot choir.

I stirred the tea, moving my wrist in soft rhythmic patterns until it's so sore I can barely feel it. The tea steamed, sending smoke ascending out of the small teacup. A family heirloom, from when my multiple great-grandma migrated to Australia from China. And now here it was in my hands. Passed down to me from my Nonna. My Mama never got it. She died before my Nonna did.

My Nonna used to tell me that life was like a hot tea. Steaming until it no longer did. So you need to drink while it's hot, while it's better. I never understood what that meant until she left me. Alone in this cold dark world, forever.

I sipped the hot tea gently, before putting my shoes on and grabbing my coat. I walked down the beach like I used to do with Nonna. I ran on the sand before sitting down and watching the waves lap against the shore, wishing they would swallow me up whole.

I ran along the shoreline, sand sticking uncomfortably in between my toes. Doing cartwheels as the sun set, Nonna was leaving me. Again.

I didn't want to go home, but it was lightly sprinkling now and soon I knew it would be pouring like my tears each night before bed. I remember her wrinkly, soft hands rubbing my forehead each night, her hobbly knees wobbling under the bed.

Pain and grief come and go like a ball in a box. I remember what Nonna said to me before she died. "Missing someone is sadness wrapped in the blessing of having known them." I recite the words in my head until I have them all jumbled up in my head.

When Nonna said that, she and I both knew she was dying. At first, I was angry with Nonna for leaving me and then telling me to not miss her with those words. But after a while, all I felt was pain and grief. Then I realised what those words had really meant.

I miss Nonna, but she's not gone, just like Mama isn't. They are right here with me, in my heart forever and ever and ever.