

Rest in Peace

In
loving
memory

R.I.P





It was a cool November day. Twenty year old Emily Jacobson knew that it would be much colder near the water so she made sure to dress up warmly before heading out to the Old Port of Montreal. She mainly liked to go there and watch all the boats. She found it peaceful and relaxing; a good place to daydream.

There aren't many boats in The Old Port of Montreal during the Fall; mostly just cruise ships. Emily found watching the calm water just as pleasant though. She sometimes even liked to just close her eyes and listen to the mix of sounds around her; people talking and laughing, children playing, the noisy seagulls, vehicles passing by, the hooves of horses feet, the flowing water of fountains, dogs barking...

Emily didn't go to the Old Port as often as she would like since her daughter Nadia was born, but that was okay. Today however, Emily really needed time away from her ten month old baby and be alone with her thoughts. Going to her favourite spot was more important than being with her daughter at the moment.

Emily was glad that her friend Veronica could watch Nadia for a few hours while her husband William was still at work. She had started her Monday by doing her usual morning routine with Nadia, but found out that her grandfather passed away and was much too emotional to continue properly taking care of her demanding baby.

Grandpa Jacobson had been ill for a while, and the last time Emily went to visit him at his retirement home he couldn't even remember who she was. It hurt Emily even if she knew it wasn't personal. Her grandfather had been forgetting a lot of things during his last weeks of life, including who his own wife was at times. Emily had witnessed him looking at Grandma Jacobson without recognition when she had stopped by for her daily visit. The couple had stopped living in the same retirement home after Grandpa Jacobson returned from the hospital because he needed special care.

Two days before Grandpa Jacobson's death, Emily had stayed by her grandfather's side and tried to spend some quality time with him despite the fact that he had no idea who she was and clearly had trouble seeing her. Emily knew that his vision had become blurry even with his glasses on, and he had somehow managed to lose them. He was squinting at her the whole time.

Grandpa Jacobson could barely hear what Emily was telling him even though he wore hearing aids in both of his ears, and didn't say much in return. Emily knew that it might be the last time she saw him alive and wanted to make the best of it because she loved him. Unfortunately, Grandpa Jacobson got tired pretty fast and needed to nap so the visit was short.

Emily left the retirement home with the vision of her beloved grandfather sitting on a chair next to his single unmade bed, wearing an oxygen mask and in obvious pain. She cried then, and was crying again now.

Grandpa Jacobson had lived a long and happy life. He was three months short of celebrating his eighty third birthday when he passed away. Although Emily was happy that he had not left the world at an earlier age like most of her friends grandparents, she still partially wished that he could have died during a more peaceful time rather than live with lung cancer, among other health issues, and have to go through all sorts of unpleasant chemotherapy sessions and radiation treatments only to become dependant on high doses of morphine as well as oxygen tanks. The doctors felt that it was too dangerous to do an operation and Grandpa Jacobson had become close to a vegetable.

Every day, resident staff members would have to help grandpa Jacobson get dressed and change his adult diapers. He needed assistance with his baths and wore a large bib to eat his mushed up food. Grandpa Jacobson never left his room unless it was absolutely necessary, and he had completely lost interest in his favourite social activities such as playing pool or bingo. He had no energy to do anything, and mostly just spent his last days in front of his small tube television. He didn't necessarily watch anything. Sometimes he just stared straight ahead at the screen without really paying attention to what was playing at a really high volume, or he slept through the noise. He didn't go out for some fresh air anymore, nor did he turn his head towards the bedroom window to watch the children play in the schoolyard or the birds fly by like he used to. He didn't read any of the paperback novels or newspapers people brought him either.

For weeks now, the Jacobson family had simply been waiting for Grandpa Jacobson to leave the world, not quite ready to see him go but unable to stand the pitiful state he was in.

When her father called to give her the news of Grandpa Jacobson's passing, Emily had felt mixed emotions; sad that somebody she loved very much just died, but happy that he was no longer suffering. She was told that he died in his sleep, which was good. Emily imagined him looking down on everyone from heaven.

During her phone conversation with her dad, Emily felt that she needed to be strong. She had listened to him cry while holding back tears of her own in order to be able to comfort him.

Emily was going to call her grandmother right after hanging up with her father, but by then she could no longer control her own emotions; tears came out of her green eyes like a water fountain. She also realised that many other people would probably try to call and that her grandmother might prefer to be left alone the same way she wanted to ignore the world for a little while.

As Emily sat alone on a wooden bench in front of the docks, she thought about all the good things she used to do with her grandfather when he was alive and well. Going on a paddleboat at the summer cottage was one of them. Emily remembered asking him to make the small boat go faster and being unable to reach the pedals to help him out as a young child. As she grew older, that changed. Eventually, she was the one doing the peddling alone because her grandfather didn't have as much energy or strength in his skinny old legs.

Emily remembered a time where Grandpa Jacobson didn't need a cane or a walker to move around. He used to chase her around the house or backyard and tickle her when he caught her. That always made her laugh crazily.

Grandpa Jacobson was the best with kids.

Emily remembered her grandfather sneaking her hard candies before dinnertime and putting his finger over his mouth as he did so. It was their little secret. He also offered her salted peanuts from a small bubblegum machine that he kept in the living room on a small end table right between his and Grandma Jacobson's lazy boy recliners, and made the weirdest dessert; a slice of white bread dipped in molasses. He knew what his grandkids loved best though; ice cream and popsicles. Whenever an ice cream truck would go by he would gather some of his change and buy Emily a cold treat.

On occasion Grandpa Jacobson had brought Emily and her cousins to eat at fast food places when Grandma Jacobson was out. She did all the cooking. The only meal Emily remembered her grandfather ever preparing was toast. He somehow made the best ones though. He put the right combination of butter, smooth peanut butter, and strawberry jam.

The grey poodle Grandpa Jacobson owned always looked interested in "people food," but Emily only gave Benji his dog treats. She tasted one of the beef flavoured bone shaped cookies once and didn't like it. She did enjoy crawling into the big metal cage Benji slept in though. There had been many pictures of Emily playing inside that cage with the dog staring at her looking confused. She fell asleep in it once.

Emily let out a laugh at the memory of herself acting like a vicious guard dog once when somebody had rung her grandparents' doorbell. She had run on her feet and hands all the way to the front door and actually growled and imitated a bark. Grandpa Jacobson had laughed pretty hard at that. Emily really missed his laugh. She missed a lot of things about him.

During her childhood, Emily liked to sleep in her grandparents' walk in closet when they lived in their big house. It was she who had requested it the first time, and it became a habit when-

ever she slept over. Her grandfather would lend her his sleeping bag as well as a flashlight, and Emily would bring some toys with her to keep herself entertained in the morning until one of the adults woke up.

Grandpa Jacobson was usually the first one to get out of bed, and he would play a board game with Emily. He taught her how to play chess. Grandpa Jacobson would sometimes draw with Emily too, and had shown her how to draw different types of animals. He wasn't very good at it, but to Emily he was an amazing artist. She kept a lot of his artwork and secretly laughed at them when she got older. Anything Emily would draw or colour for her grandfather as a child would end up on the fridge and the best ones eventually got transferred to an album.

Emily's grandfather was very emotional. He cried when his grandchildren did special things for him such as give him a drawing or sing him a song, when he went to see a good show or attended a wedding, and if somebody said something sentimental. Emily remembered him crying many times, but what she recalled now was an image of him shedding happy tears during his sixtieth wedding anniversary celebration after reading the romantic card his wife had given him. Emily had found it very sweet.

Grandpa Jacobson always needed tissues with him and often received a box of them as a joke gift during the holidays. Now Emily was the one who needed tissues. Tears had started running down her rosy cheeks again.

A man walking by with his big dog stopped to see if Emily was okay. Emily nodded "yes" as she blew her nose with a tissue she had just pulled out of her coat pocket, but the man did not look convinced. Even the dog looked concerned for Emily. He put his large brown paw on her leg and gave a little whine. While sobbing, Emily had to explain to the stranger and his pet that there had been a death in her family. The nice man gave his condolences and let her be alone again. Emily saw that the dog kept stopping to look back at her. "Grandpa would have loved you," she whispered.

Emily remained on the bench for another half hour despite the cold wind that suddenly picked up. When she realised that her fingers, toes and cheeks were frozen she finally headed back to the metro station. She couldn't help herself from going out of her way to step onto dry colourful leaves along the way. The crunchy sound reminded Emily of her grandfather, who used to rake big piles for her to jump in.

Another thing that reminded Emily of her grandfather was the horse drawn carriages in Old Montreal. Grandpa Jacobson had taken her on a half hour ride for her tenth birthday. The horse had been brown, just like the one that was now passing by her and possible tourists.

Emily did her best not to cry on the metro or bus.

She stopped at Veronica's to pick up Nadia, who seemed happy to see her mother. That made Emily smile. She was happy to see her daughter too, and gave her a big hug.

Veronica's identical twin daughters were at the door and asked Emily if she was okay. The question asked by the nearly two year old girls made Emily tear up for some reason. She said yes, but didn't look okay at all.

Emily wiped her uncontrollable tears and accepted the sweet hugs the twins were offering her. "It's okay," one of them said and handed over her small brown teddy bear. "You feel better." Emily appreciated the young girl's kind gesture. She knew that the stuffed animal was her favourite. Emily thanked the twin she now recognised as being Melody, and gave her a little kiss on the head. Her sister Cloe wanted a kiss too so Emily gave her one.

"Are you going to be okay?" Veronica asked in a concerned voice. Emily told her yes and thanked her for watching Nadia. "Anytime!" Veronica replied.

Emily could sense her friend watching her as she walked down the short gravel driveway and onto the sidewalk so she turned around. "I'll be fine. Really," she said. Veronica smiled looking convinced and closed the door.

For a while, Emily was all right. She joyfully played with Nadia for the rest of the afternoon.

When William got home from work, Emily told him the bad news and started crying again. William did the best he could to comfort her. He didn't know Grandpa Jacobson very well, but he liked him and was sad about his death too.

William took a day off work to go to the funeral with Emily. They had debated on whether or not to bring Nadia with them, but finally decided that she should be there. They bought her a nice black frilly dress and pretty black shoes for the occasion, as well as thick black tights so that her legs would not be cold. Emily owned a long black dress she could wear with a shawl to keep her upper body warm, and William had a suit.

Emily had been fine during the rest of the week and didn't shed a single tear when her father came to pick them up for the funeral on the gloomy Friday morning. She simply gave him a long hug. William politely gave his condolences before putting Nadia in her car seat.

When they arrived at the funeral parlour, other well-dressed family members were standing in the small parking lot either talking to each other or slowly making their way inside the beige building. Emily was happy to see her aunts and uncles as well as her cousins with their significant others and young children. It had been a while since everyone had gotten togeth-

er, but Emily wished that the current reunion had been under better circumstances.

Everyone gave each other comforting hugs as they met up and asked one another how they were doing. People commented on how much Nadia had grown. Emily made the same remark about her cousins' children. She had mostly just seen pictures of the kids on Facebook. She was guilty of not really visiting anyone with the baby and letting them see Nadia's progress online too. It wasn't easy to see her cousins anymore now that they all lived in different cities.

Right before going inside the funeral home, Emily was introduced to some of her grandfather's siblings and friends. They politely exchanged handshakes.

Finally, the moment Emily dreaded came. She followed her father inside the funeral home, having to accept that her grandfather was really gone.

When she entered, Emily noticed how luxurious the place was. Crystal chandeliers hung from the high ceiling and the walls were covered in pretty wallpaper. They were greeted by a man wearing a black suit, who directed them to the right where a large sign announcing Gaston Jacobson's funeral stood.

An open guest book with fancy beige pages sat on a small wooden table. Many people had already signed their names under short messages addressed to Grandpa Jacobson. Emily let her father and William take their turns at jotting something down. When she figured out the perfect thing to write she took the black fountain pen and scribbled down her personal message in nice cursive letters.

With her husband and daughter by her side, Emily walked behind her father into a small room that had three large vertical windows with closed beige curtains. She saw more family members and went to see each one of them individually. Everyone whispered to one another above the calm music that was playing.

Emily wasn't too sure what to do about the coat she ended up putting on. Most people just had theirs wrapped over one of their arms so she did the same with hers and Nadia's until she spotted a two-seater couch piled with jackets and purses.

Eventually Emily made her way towards her grandfather's urn. Her uncle Serge had crafted it himself using different types of wood. A large portrait of Grandpa Jacobson wearing a nice black suit with a pinned white flower stood to the right side of the nice urn, and two lovely arrangements of flowers had been placed on wooden pillars on each side of the small wooden rectangular altar where the urn was.

Emily observed a moment of silence. William did the same, taking her right hand. Nadia babbled, but there was nothing the parents could do about it. There was no way to make her understand what was going on. At least she wasn't the only child who would not stay quiet. Some of them were actually running around while making noise.

After her moment of silence, Emily turned around and saw two of her male cousins trying to discipline their young sons without causing a bigger scene. She tried not to laugh at the memory of her cousins acting like brats. She wanted to go tell them that their kids had turned out just like them as a joke, but it wasn't the time.

Emily continued to mingle with her family, heading towards newcomers as they entered the room. So far, Emily felt relatively okay. Her tears left as soon as they came.

That changed as soon as Emily saw her grandmother walk into the room. Watching Grandma Jacobson burst into tears at the sight of her husband's urn broke Emily's heart and she experienced a sudden explosion of tears of her own. She was glad to have William by her side. He took her in his strong arms and let Emily dig her head into his chest.

Others had gone to comfort Grandma Jacobson and once Emily felt she could bring her comfort too she went over to see her grandmother with Nadia. "I am so happy to see you," Grandma Jacobson said as she squeezed Emily and Nadia at the same time. "We are happy to see you too grandma," Emily calmly responded with the best smile she could master.

William politely gave his condolences and looked surprised to receive a hug. The few times he had met Grandma Jacobson she had simply given him a quick kiss on each cheek. Now she was holding him tight.

When Grandma Jacobson finally let go of William, she moved on to give others tight hugs.

A slideshow of pictures had begun playing on the opposite side of the room from where the urn was. Once people realised this, they turned their attention towards the flat screen attached to the wall. A few personal comments were made as each photo was shown.

Emily had submitted a few pictures of her grandfather for the project, put together by her aunt Meg. She loved the one where her grandfather was proudly holding a newborn Nadia with a big smile on his wrinkly face. "That's you," she told her daughter.

Nadia seemed more interested in the other kids that were in the room, so Emily put her down on the polished hardwood floor and let her excitedly crawl towards them. She asked William to keep an eye on her while she continued to look at the pictures.

The slideshow started again from the very beginning.

There were a few black and white pictures of Grandpa Jacobson in his early twenties. It was weird to see him looking so young. He was very handsome and Emily could see why her grandmother had been physically attracted to him. She had always talked about how good looking he was, and charming too.

A nice wedding picture was seen on the screen. Emily had always loved how happy her grandparents seemed to be. She hoped that she and William would continue following in their footsteps and grow old together.

Pictures of Grandpa Jacobson with his six children were now shown. The two girls had posed nice and proper, but the four boys looked like they were up to no good. Emily remembered some of the stories about her uncles and father, and how Grandpa Jacobson used to discipline them. She had never seen that side of him because she had always behaved with him. She had been his little angel. Now he would be hers; her guardian angel.

Colour pictures started showing up on the screen. The ones of Emily and her cousins brought back good childhood memories. There were many pictures taken during family barbecues and holiday get togethers.

A picture of Grandpa Jacobson wearing a funny costume that consisted of a polka dot bowtie, a pair of huge yellow plastic sunglasses, and a fake brown moustache got everyone laughing.

The picture Emily loved so much was back on the screen, followed by a few others. The final shot was of Grandpa Jacobson in his best suit with his birth date and date of death written right above in fancy black letters.

The slideshow started once again.

Emily went to find Nadia, who looked like she was racing with another baby in the hallway. The two babies were laughing as they crawled at a fast speed beside one another. Emily's cousin's nine and a half month old son Justin won the race.

The babies continued to innocently play together in the hall while the adults talked to each other until it was time to go inside the chapel.

Emily picked up Nadia, who wasn't happy about it until she realised that Justin was following them with his mom. William had already collected Emily and Nadia's jackets from the other room, unsure if it was okay to leave them there.

When Emily entered the little chapel, she saw that the altar with her grandfather's urn and picture had been relocated. A tall glass vase with seven roses, six red coloured ones and one white, was set on the opposite side of the picture. Two of the funeral home employees dressed in black suits were just setting up the pillars with the other two flower arrangements.

The front row of the chapel was strictly reserved for Grandma Jacobson and her six children. Everyone else filled the following nine rows. Emily and William sat in the sixth row with Nadia as well as Justin and his parents.

Once everyone was settled, the priest said a few nice words as well as a short prayer. He then invited those who had written eulogies to come forward.

Emily's cousin Melissa gave a very nice speech that described their grandfather perfectly. Their aunt Dana tried to voice her own written speech but kept tearing up. This made Emily tear up too. Dana's husband calmly stood up and came to her side. He ended up finishing off what she had started by reading out loud what she had written down on a lined piece of paper. Emily thought that was very touching.

The priest spoke again as Emily grabbed a tissue from the box in front of her, provided by the funeral home. She wiped her tears, and grabbed another tissue to wipe her nose. Many people were crying now.

Emily saw her father crying in the front row and wanted to go to him. The priest requested a minute of silence so she stayed where she was.

Nadia started to be vocal so William left the chapel with her. She could still be heard behind the closed doors. Emily was glad that her daughter was at least being joyful rather than whining, even if her timing was bad.

After the minute of silence passed, the priest asked that Grandma Jacobson and her children come place roses around grandpa Jacobson's urn. In turn, grandma Jacobson followed by her four sons and two daughters grabbed a long stem rose from the glass vase on the left of the urn and placed it directly on the altar right in front of the urn.

Grandma Jacobson began to cry loudly as she placed her white rose down, which made Emily cry in return again. She could not stand seeing her grandmother in so much emotional pain.

Emily had calmed down by the time her father picked his red rose and put it on the altar with the other flowers.

The priest put on some soothing music and left the chapel. Emily thought that the funeral was over, but nobody was getting up so she remained quietly in her seat too. The priest returned

a few minutes later once the recorded song stopped playing.

After a few more words were said, the priest asked Grandma Jacobson and her children to stand together in front of the urn. They all got up. Once they were all standing closely together, they instinctively put their arms around each other's waists. It was quite touching to see.

The funeral ceremony ended, and everyone slowly left the chapel. Emily met William and Nadia in the hall. When she spotted her father, Emily went to see him. He was holding a red rose in one hand, and crumpled up tissues in the other. Emily took the dirty tissues from him and found a nearby garbage to dispose of them.

Emily saw that her grandmother had taken back her white rose and her aunts and uncles held their red ones like her dad.

Everyone headed outside to their cars to go to the cemetery. They drove into the site one by one, forming a single line on the car path of small rocks. Eventually everyone parked their cars right on the path and got out of their vehicles. They quietly walked on dead grass as well as a few crunchy leaves to where Grandpa Jacobson's ashes would be buried.

A small freshly dug up square hole beside a little pile of dirt could be seen. Emily noticed right away that it was right in front of a familiar granite tombstone; that of her cousin Francesca. She died of Spina Bifida, a neural tube defect where her spine didn't properly develop, when she was just a baby. Grandpa Jacobson actually had a very minor case of the same disease, but had learned to live with it.

Emily shed a few tears for the cousin she never had a chance to know and squeezed Nadia. She was extremely grateful that her daughter was well and healthy. Since Spina Bifida is genetic, there was a fair chance that Nadia could have been born with the disease. With today's technology though, Emily was able to get a test done on her unborn child and it confirmed that the foetus was fine.

Francesca's parents touched their daughter's tombstone before joining their two adult daughters and son as well as their two beautiful grandchildren within the circle of family members and friends that had formed around the pile of dirt.

Grandpa Jacobson's urn was gently placed on the ground and a brief burial ceremony began.

As the priest spoke, Emily saw her father leave the group. She wondered if she should go to him, but realised that he wanted to be alone. She knew that he didn't like crying in front of other people. When he reintegrated the group, Emily took him by the hand.

Once again, Grandma Jacobson and her children were asked to put roses in front of the urn.

When they were ready, they each walked up to the urn and deposited the flower they were already holding. Most of them took a few extra seconds to say goodbye.

Grandma Jacobson didn't break down in tears this time. She simply put her white rose down and then lightly kissed the tip of two of her fingers so that she could transfer the kiss onto her husband's urn.

Many people did the same thing as Grandma Jacobson afterwards, including Emily. Nadia mimicked her mother without really understanding what she was doing. "Bye bye!" she said waving her little hand after Emily said bye.

Once everyone had their chance to say their farewells, the group slowly started heading back to their cars. They all met up again in the basement of the funeral parlour for a catered lunch.

A small buffet of assorted sandwiches and salads along with cut up pieces of cheese, fruits, and vegetables was set up on a long marble counter. There were also two trays of various desserts placed in individual white paper cups. Orange juice, milk, and coffee were available to drink.

It looked like nobody wanted to be the very first one to prepare themselves a plate, so Emily broke the ice. Her stomach was growling and she knew that Nadia needed to eat soon too. So, she stocked up a plate full of delicious food for herself and the baby while William went to choose a place to sit among all the folded out wooden tables.

Emily found her husband sitting right next to her father, who had gotten himself a coffee. She sat down across from them and put her paper plate as well as plastic utensils and napkin on the table. William handed her Nadia so that he could get in the line that had now formed to get some food. Emily's father followed his son in law.

As people selected their food and ate, they all started to loosen up a bit. Jokes were made and people started laughing and smiling again.

After they were done eating, Emily let Nadia play on the ground for a little bit. The baby crawled around on the carpeted floor and made her way to an unoccupied brown plastic folding chair. Nadia stood up using the support of the unfolded chair, and to Emily's surprise she let go of it and remained standing for a couple of seconds before falling on her padded butt.

Nadia repeated the motion several times and then took a few tiny steps forward without holding on to anything. Emily was super excited about it but remembered that she had just attended a funeral. She wasn't sure if it would be appropriate to exclaim what Nadia had just done. She then realised that her grandfather would not have wanted her to continue dwelling, and

that he would want her to share her current excitement. So, she did.

Emily brought Nadia over to William and told him that their daughter had something special to show him. Nadia stood up holding her mother's fingers for support and took a few steps. Emily soon made Nadia let go of her fingers. Nadia remained standing and took two more steps completely on her own. William became just as excited as Emily, and people started to come over to see what all the commotion was about. "Nadia took her first steps!" Emily blurted out each time.

Everyone was happy about Nadia's steps and the baby became excited to show her audience what she could do over and over again.

Although everyone was still mourning, they all knew that life simply had to go on.

Emily's cousin Danika decided to announce that she was now three months pregnant. "Grandpa was the only person I told so far aside from Sean and our parents," she said. Danika and her husband Sean looked both happy and sad at the same time. Emily knew exactly how they felt.

"I can only imagine how happy Grandpa was when you gave him the good news," Emily said. "I bet you needed to give him a tissue." "Yes I did," Danika said laughing lightly. Everyone else laughed with her. "He'll want us all to continue being happy," Emily said. "He may not physically be with us anymore, but he'll always be in our hearts."

When everyone left the funeral home, it was drizzling outside. "I think your little speech made your grandfather tear up as usual," Emily's father said before giving her a wink. Emily imagined Grandpa Jacobson crying happy tears from a cloud and smiled. "I love you grandpa," she said staring up at the clear blue sky. She then saw a magnificent rainbow as light rain continued to come down.



Chantal Bellehumeur 2013

(I once read somewhere that a person loved by a writer could never die. I can't keep my loved ones from dying in real life, but I can make them live again in my stories. This story was written in memory of my grandfather, Gilles Bellehumeur, who sadly passed away this summer. He may no longer physically be among us, but he will always be in our hearts.)

Follow Chantal on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Chantal-Bellehumeur-public-author-page/347446362035640>

Find Chantal on Goodreads to read or write reviews on her published work.

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4538804.Chantal_Bellehumeur

Find Chantal Bellehumeur's novels on Amazon:

http://www.amazon.ca/Books/s?ie=UTF8&field-author=Chantal%20Bellehumeur&page=1&rd=1&rh=n%3A916520%2Cp_27%3AChantal%20Bellehumeur

Whether you own any of Chantal's books or not, you can request a personalized **digital autograph** from her.

http://www.authorgraph.com/authors/c_bellehumeur