1Au revoir

By Pragati Kharel

That evening, I was tired because I had worked in the lavender field all day with my Dad. All I needed to do was drink Mommy’s café crème and relax on Grandma’s antique rocking chair. The soft cushions of the chair always made me feel like I was in a swing made up of clouds as I rocked back and forth. The fireplace made it seem as if my body could feel the warmth of the sun. It was my happy place where all of my stresses would fly away.

After taking a cold shower, I was more than ready to go there and relax. I went downstairs to find the chair, but it was not there. That felt a bit odd, where would the chair go? I looked around and I saw Mommy in the dining hall. She was holding Bruno in her hands. I checked my watch and it was 8:30 pm, and that was the time to prepare my café crème in Mommy’s strict schedule. What was even more unusual, was that Bruno’s eyes were closed. I had never seen the dog sleep before. He always loved running and jumping around the house, giving everyone his sloppy cuddles and kisses. He was such an attention seeker; but I loved him. Mommy would never let him in for that long because she was afraid our entire house would smell like dog shampoo. And now she was holding him? In the kitchen? I knew something was wrong. But, when my Mommy saw me, she gave me a smile. That smile was an assurance that everything was alright. And I believed her.

I asked her where Grandma’s chair was and she said Grandma took it in her room. I was mad. All the hard work I had done in the field, would not be worth it if I did not get to nap on that chair. I had to confront Grandma. I walked toward the stairs and noticed our storage room had its door open. When I went there to close it, I noticed the chair inside. I became even more furious, but this time at Mommy. Why would she lie to me?

I went inside to get it, but when I saw that chair, it felt like my arms and legs got so heavy. I just wanted to throw my whole body on the chair and not move a muscle. That was the effect the chair often had on me, and I loved it.

This time, there was no warmth from the sun. It was just chilly and dark. The clouds were dark too. But, I could smell a familiar scent. I wasn’t exactly sure what it was, but I knew it was something I loved. Slowly, the scent started getting stronger; and as it got stronger, I started seeing some clouds and stars around me. They brought some light in that world. I started feeling safe. I could relax again.

I then noticed that the scent was coming from something. Something that was moving closer and closer towards me. And then a moment later, I knew it was right behind me. I was not afraid of it but I was nervous to look. When I turned around, it was our beloved, Bruno the doggo. I hugged him as soon as I saw him. I could smell his dog shampoo the strongest at that point and the stars and the clouds were brighter than ever! For some reason, that moment felt so perfect as if I was going to lose it all if I let go. I did not want to let go.

“Margret! Honey, you’re not supposed to be sleeping on that chair,” Mommy said. I woke up and saw her standing on the door of the storage room.

I realized that I could still smell the dog shampoo and it was not just my imagination. In fact, my arms were covered in dog hair. A lot of dog hair. I’d bet Mommy could smell Bruno’s scent and see the fur as well. She usually gets mad when she smells the shampoo, but that night, she did not look mad. She looked upset.

“Why can’t I sleep on this chair Mommy?” I asked. She covered her face with a scarf and ran outside. At that point, I knew for sure something was wrong.

After a minute or so, I heard Grandma’s footsteps approaching the door. I could tell as I could also hear her stick. She came inside and sat beside me. “What is wrong Grandma?” I asked. She looked at me with a warm and comforting smile. I said, “I had a dream about Bruno. He made the clouds and the stars shine bright. It felt like he was about to leave so I hugged him tight. Could we please let him inside the house for tonight so that he doesn’t leave us?” Grandma’s smile did not fade. “My dear, you cannot see Bruno anymore, but he can come in the house whenever he wishes. But you can only meet him where the clouds and the stars are,” she said while holding my hands so tight, worried that I may burst into tears. She added, “So, where are they sweetheart?” I knew the answer to that question. They were in that chair. I truly believed, and still do, that Bruno will always be with me in my happy place, making the stars and the clouds shine brighter than ever.

Now that I think about it, it finally makes sense. Why was the chair in the storage room? Why did the chair smell like Bruno? Why did he lose so much hair? Why was he asleep in Mommy’s hands? Why did he appear in my dream that felt so real? Little did I know, I saw Bruno for the last time that day. But I was not upset. I was not upset because it was not a sad goodbye, it was a hopeful au revoir.