

I had no choice!

Word count – 569 words

I stood at the front of the ornate chapel. The funeral guests stared at me expectantly. I had no choice but to read the poem I had written for Nanna. She deserved to be honoured, especially after all she had done for me. I took a deep breath and I touched the little crystal that was in my pocket. It gave me courage.

I don't really remember the words that I spoke, instead my mind drifted back to the day I received the crystal. I remember walking into the nursing home. My heart sank as I saw Pearl's framed photograph on the reception desk. This meant only one thing. Pearl was no longer with us. I wanted to turn and run but I had no choice but to comfort Nanna. Pearl was Nanna's best friend at the nursing home.

The single tear on my cheek was mirrored on Nanna's face. I held her hand and we sat quietly at first, but then the memories flowed. Memories of many hotly contested games of bingo. They sure loved bingo! Pearl's encouraging nods and smiles as I played my cello for Nanna while all the other residents chorused in the background, "What's that horrible noise? Can you make it stop?" I remembered one time when Pearl asked Nanna to open a tin for her. Expecting it to contain lollies, Nanna was shocked when she was suddenly covered in denture juice instead. We all laughed hard that day. Nanna and I laughed again at the memory.

I stayed with Nanna until she drifted off to sleep. As I was leaving, I felt compelled to take one last look at Pearl's room. A cascade of shivery sensations rippled through me. I saw a younger version of Pearl silhouetted in the arm chair by the window. The lady looked up from her ponderings and smiled at me. "You must be Grace. Mum told me so much about you." As though responding to the question that

lingered silently on my face, she continued, “Yes, I made it in time to say goodbye. I had no choice but to come this time! I had been putting it off for too long.”

She smiled, handed me a beautiful music box and gestured for me to open it. It contained a little aquamarine crystal and a handwritten note. Tears flowed unabatedly as I read

Dear Grace

I know that when you read this I will be gone. I had no choice but to leave. It was my time.

I didn't say anything, but it troubled me that you spoke often about having no choice. Please remember, every time you thought this, you were actually choosing to be brave and courageous. You also made a choice to be my friend and I am very thankful for that.

Please take this little crystal to remember me. Keep it close and use its power when you feel like you have no choice!

Your loving friend

Pearl

I found myself transported back to the chapel, my eyes tracing the final lines of my poem. Amidst the hush of the chapel, my voice stood unwavering. While making my way back to my seat, I paused momentarily beside Nanna's casket. I placed the crystal from my pocket next to the photograph of Nanna. I had no choice but to say goodbye. I just hoped that Nanna and Pearl were happily playing bingo together again.

By Scarlett

