

## Dropping a Stitch

*By Steve Heron*

Every Sunday we pick a big bunch of flowers and visit Grandma Ninny in the nursing home.

Ninny loves flowers and misses her garden.

Grandma Ninny always has her knitting needles ready for when I come. She taught me how to knit.

We knitted a scarf, with my team colours.

A beanie, in my brother's team colours.

A colourful blanket for my doll.

And our latest project, a jumper for Poochie.

I love visiting her, but lately, Ninny is feeling unwell.

She is often forgetting things and stares at the walls.

Mum told me she has Alzheimer's disease.

'What is Alzheimer's?' I asked.

'Milli, Grandma Ninny is quite ill. Her memory is not so good anymore. It's like she has dropped some stitches in knitting.' Mum blinked the tears from her eyes. I hugged her, hoping to take some of the hurt away.

'Who is the little girl?' Ninny said to Mum one visit.

My heart felt like it was breaking into a thousand pieces. *How could Ninny forget who I am?*

Mum's arms wrapped around me and soaked up some of my hurt.

It's not the same when I see Ninny. She doesn't get her knitting out anymore, and she doesn't talk very much. My heart aches, and I can't find the right words to say.

One day when we visited, Mum was talking to the nurse, and I was alone with Ninny. My hands were fidgety and sweaty as I tried to think of something to say.

I reached down and got Ninny's knitting bag out and started to knit Poochie's jumper.

At first, Ninny didn't say anything. It didn't even look like she was watching.

When I accidentally made a mistake, Ninny's voice surprised me, 'You dropped a stitch Milli.'

My eyes looked up at Grandma Ninny. The smile on her face was like a blossoming flower.

I stretched across and touched her hand. 'I'll try to be more careful Ninny.'

She continued to smile as she gently squeezed my hand. 'Purl two knit three,' she said, 'It will be a fine jumper for Poochie.'

'Thanks Ninny.'

I tried to be careful with each stitch.

Every time we visit after that day, I always take the knitting out of the bag. It helps her remember me and most of the time Grandma Ninny smiles.

On the days when she is feeling well enough, we have a long chat about her garden.

END

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