

Lily Flind

### Connections

The roots were smooth, little,  
like the hand I held in mine.  
Tiny buds materialized,  
the buds of something new.  
Wind rustled through the spindly branches,  
sounding like our strings of melodic laughter.

The roots were bigger, stronger,  
like the hand I held in mine.  
The buds blossomed into delicate flowers,  
the growth of something big.  
The leaves were luscious and green,  
vibrant colours of our love.

The roots were slightly rougher, wrinkled,  
like the hand I held in mine.  
The flowers started to crinkle at the tips,  
the years were running away.  
The leaves' colours were mellowing,  
like the colour of our greying hair.

The roots were calloused, gnarled,  
Like the hand I held in mine.  
The flowers disintegrated into nothing,  
the days that we had left.  
The leaves were shedded, floating to the ground,  
Like the things we never did.

The tree was bare, hollow, dead,  
Like the hand I no longer held.

# BEATRICE HOLE

## INTERMEDIATE

### Connections

I was always his best girl. That's what I heard as soon as I stepped through their front door. I would be enveloped by him in a huge warm hug that made me feel so safe, like nothing could ever get to me or harm me. I absolutely adored being in his company. He was such a joy; he always made me laugh.

He also always spoilt me rotten. He'd always insist on buying me and my siblings this toy or that cake. Or that book. Especially that book. Reading was his favourite pastime, so he was delighted when we showed such a passion for reading too. I could always rely on him to get me a good book for Christmas or my birthday.

Then one day he started to feel different. His dinner lay untouched on the table. His newspapers remained at the shop. Even his beloved books were left unopened by his bed collecting dust.

Then suddenly I was told that I wouldn't be able to see him again. That he'd gone to live in heaven with God and the angels. I felt a deep pain in my heart as the grief overwhelmed me, engulfed me, like an unstoppable tsunami of sadness. As I broke down, great jerking cries vibrated through my body. It felt as though I was being literally pulled down, like my arms were attached to huge, great weights, as I let everything sink in. I knew, from that day on, that nothing would ever be the same again.

No-one talked about it. One of the most important people in your life isn't here anymore yet nobody says anything. No-one mentioned there being one less setting at the table, or noticed the empty chair in the corner of the lounge.

I'd never been to a funeral before. I didn't really want to go to any funeral, but I wasn't going to miss it, this one last celebration of his life. Not for the world. He is my Grandad.

I didn't want to talk at the funeral though. It was too hard. My brother did however, whilst my younger sister picked a poem about rainbows from a book that our Grandad had given her. She was too young to be there on the day, but she would still play her part in the celebration. What I wanted to do was draw. So, I drew a sun setting on the sea for the order of service, like the sun going down on Grandad's life, but knowing that he would always be with us.

And he is. When you'd least expect it and in the most beautiful of ways.

My last birthday, my first one without him, I was opening presents from my grandma, when the room suddenly fell silent. Then I heard it, the sad, but beautiful notes of the piece of music; 'Ladies in Lavender' that had been played for the committal. We all started silently sobbing, but in a way, I felt reassured, knowing that Grandad is always there.

Another time was on my dad's birthday. Grandad was my dad's father and they were very close, so he was having an extremely hard time. It was hard for everyone, but especially for Dad. This time it was his turn to open his presents and as he looked up and out of the

window, there in front of him was the full arch of a beautiful rainbow shining over the sea, just like the one in the poem that my sister had chosen. It was a very special moment, as we were shown, once again, that he is always here with us. He loved birthdays and Christmas; he couldn't wait to share the presents. He's showing us he's not going to miss out now!

All of this reflects how very thin the line is between heaven and earth and that the two are connected in ways that we could never quite understand. For me, this truly reassures me, as I know that there will always be a connection to those that we love, who live all around us in the cooling breeze, in the sun's rays shining on the morning's dewy grass. And of course, in the colours of the beautiful arching rainbows.

Béatrice Hole



## Connections

I feel the slushy, sticky mud  
squelching with every step.

Then I'm climbing and clambering onto the lookout

I will see everyone from here.

I inhale and smell a sickly, sweet scent  
of people who've left us, who've gone.

Of people who no longer walk the earth  
who no longer breath the air.

Of people who no longer see the sun  
when it rises, and when it falls.

Of people who will not live again  
why is the world so cruel?

But I've been set a job, a mission, a task  
that I have no choice but to obey.

Because I'm on the lookout for a reason

I'm going to have to shoot the Hun.

We are enemies they say  
but I don't see the point  
what did they ever do to me?

Then I see the foe, the enemy, the man  
by a tree where he stands.

His gun is slung across his shoulder  
he is cautious, looking around.

He slips and slides in the dirt  
as he slowly advances towards me,

I load, aim and fire  
and see him fall to the ground.  
It's sunset now and I watch the horizon  
I have killed an innocent man.

Yan  
Thum

I'm back in the trenches  
and it's a new day  
we are making another attack.  
Our sergeant is screaming out orders  
but I'm in my own little world.  
My heart is racing,  
my head is spinning,  
I feel my legs begin to give way,  
but instead I am climbing over the trench  
then weaving our way through barbed wire.  
We are running now and gaining ground fast  
but we are losing more men by the second.

I look to my left,  
I look to my right,  
I am one of the last men left.  
I dive and roll behind a tree  
before their guns pick me out.  
My gun is slung across my shoulder  
I am cautious, looking around.  
I'm slipping and sliding in the dirt  
as I slowly advance towards them.  
Then they load, aim and fire  
and it's me who falls to the ground.

And as I lie there on the dirt, seeping out blood, an image comes to mind  
of last night when I killed an innocent man  
now that innocent man is me...