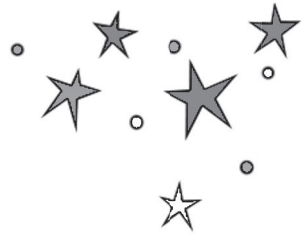


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1



Grandparents really are the **BEST** kind of parent. Well, at least that's what Ace Sinclair always told himself and his friends. 'Because grandparents have the word **"grand"** in their title,' he would say in an extremely matter-of-fact tone. And the truth was that Ace's grandparents were the grandest of any of them. They had lived together at Number 11 Helix Gardens in a white house with a royal-blue door since Ace was two years old. He couldn't remember much about his own



parents, but Gaga and Gigi had told him so many wonderful stories about them that it didn't seem to matter one bit.

'Gaga' was the first word Ace ever spoke. Nobody could quite believe that he'd said it because Ace's mum had called her own grandfather 'Gaga' when she was little! So Gaga it had always been, and it suited him perfectly.

Before he'd become 'Gaga', Daniel Patrick O'Sullivan had had many different jobs in his seventy-four years of life. He'd been a bricklayer, a firefighter, a driver (although not the racing kind, like Ace's favourite sportsperson, Lewis Hamilton), an insurance broker, a Savile Row tailor and even a florist!

He had retired a total of three times and that meant that he'd received his pension on three different occasions, but Ace still hadn't quite worked out what a pension actually was.

Gaga told the best jokes, but he also had a **terrible** habit of laughing at the punchline before he'd actually finished telling the joke. Nevertheless, Ace would laugh every time because Gaga laughing was always funnier than the joke itself.



Everyone loved Gaga. As soon as he spoke to anyone, they felt like they'd known him for years, and if anybody ever mentioned the word 'Ireland', well, let's just say any chance of sticking to the rest of the day's schedule was pretty much over.

When it came to fashion, Gaga was completely unique and unmissable. You could always find him in a crowd because he insisted on wearing the brightest and loudest shirts for almost every occasion. And today was no exception.

Gaga **bounced** into the kitchen wearing a shirt that was as pink as the inside of a grapefruit, wide open at the collar with the sleeves rolled up to just

below the elbows. Gaga sometimes forgot to take his pyjama shorts off before breakfast but today he had donned a pair of pale pink chinos, which, despite being a completely different shade of pink, matched his shirt surprisingly well. On his feet, he wore light brown, furry slippers – a present Ace had bought him for Christmas. He. Felt. **FANTASTIC!** Even if he did look and sound rather like a flamingo.

‘Goooooooooooood morning, all! Good morning, all! How are we all on this fine morning!’ he sang at them.

Gaga was a talented man in many ways, but singing was NOT one of his strengths. Before he could blast out

another off-key, flamingo-esque tune, Gigi brushed past him like a breath of fresh air on her way to the fridge.

‘Morning, Danny boy!’ she said to Gaga. She gave Ace a big, sloppy kiss on his forehead as he sat down at the breakfast table and then a mischievous wink, before whispering, ‘It looks like someone got up on the right side of bed this morning, didn’t they!’

Ace grinned back at her. There seemed to be something special in the air today.

Ace’s Gigi was equally as incredible as Gaga. Carmen Judith George was an extraordinarily glamorous woman. She dressed the part, she looked the part, she even smelled the part.

Even though Ace thought she was the grandest of grandmothers, Gigi was very clear that she didn't like being called 'Granny'. Instead she came up with Gigi – one 'G' standing for 'Granny' and the second for her surname, 'George'. It took Ace a while to be able to pronounce it, but the name had stuck and now he never called her anything else.

Gigi loved to travel, and the first entry on her bucket list currently read: '*Visit every country in the world.*' Of course, Gigi hadn't even been to half the countries in the world, but she was a cup-half-full type of person who always looked on the bright side.

She had a brilliant creative mind, and



had been an engineer and an inventor with business cards that read:



But those days were all ‘once upon a time’, as she would say.

Gigi was born on a small island in the Caribbean called Antigua. Ace had never been, but Gigi would tell him stories of its 365 beaches (one for every day of the year!) and how she’d left the beautiful beaches behind to live in London when she was only ten – the same age Ace was now. Her mother had decided to come to England to train as a nurse after she and

Gigi's father got divorced. Her training meant long and tiring shifts, so Gigi often had to live with friends and relatives when she was little.

She told Ace that she had sometimes felt lonely during those years, but she knew that you had to work hard to achieve your dreams and that her mum was trying to build a better life for them both.

Gigi had studied and built up an engineering empire from scratch. As engineers go, she was the very best of her kind and she often applied those creative and technical skills to everyday life. For example, she developed a recipe for her world-famous spare ribs, which were – according to Google and verified by *all*

of Ace's school friends – the best ribs in the whole world. Her breakfasts had also achieved legendary status.

Speaking of which, Gigi was putting the finishing touches to a perfect stack of six pancakes and, as she set the plate down in front of Ace, his eyes couldn't help but expand to the size of the saucer holding Gaga's cup of tea!

'Gigi!' he said. 'I thought we only had pancakes at the weekend!'

Gigi flashed another of her heart-warming smiles and replied, 'Well, I'm not sure why, but I woke up today feeling like it was a **special occasion.**'

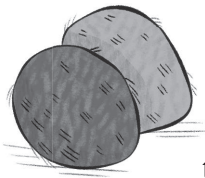
Ace smiled at her, then looked back down at his plate.



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‘What did you put in them this time?’
he asked. He knew Gigi loved to talk
about her latest culinary inventions.

Gigi returned to flipping pancakes as
she answered. ‘Today, I conducted a little
taste test to see which ingredients would
work best with each other. I know you
love lemon and sugar and, of course, those
go so brilliantly because one is bitter and
the other sweet. So I tried out a little kiwi

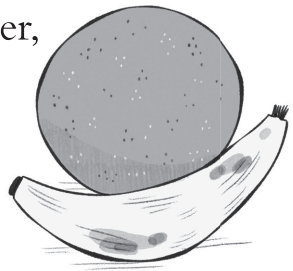


with some lime that was left over
from last night’s dinner,

then some grapefruit

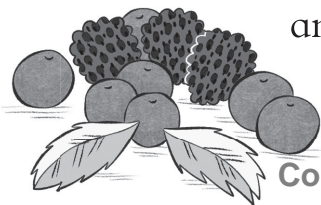
with banana, and then,

finally, blueberries, raspberries



and mint. Why don’t you

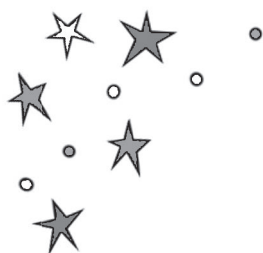
have a taste and see



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which one you think works best?’

Ace grinned as he tucked into his pancakes. He wished he could be just as brilliant as Gigi, but he was really more of an all-rounder. He wasn't the absolute best at anything, but he could be pretty good at almost everything when he was trying his hardest. Gaga said that Ace hadn't quite found what he was best at **yet**, but he was bound to one day.



2

It might surprise you to know that Gaga and Gigi weren't married. Gaga was Ace's mum's dad and Gigi was Ace's dad's mum, which sounds complicated but was simplified by the very *uncomplicated* fact that they both adored Ace. Together they made the **perfect team**. Like when Gigi wanted to buy a motorcycle with a jet-activation device to take her to a top speed of 520 mph and Ace reminded Gigi that they needed to ride around the city, not fly. He managed to convince her to

settle for two cherry-red Harley-Davidson motorbikes – with matching cherry-red sidecars.

Ace loved riding in Gigi's sidecar. They would whizz down their local high street on a Saturday morning to get their weekly groceries and Gigi always rode really fast, which meant Ace looked like he had been dragged through a hedge backwards by the time they reached their destination.

Every month or so, Gigi and Gaga would get on their motorbikes and take Ace to the nearest farm on the edge of the city. He loved visiting the farm; it was the closest he got to having actual pets.

While Gigi enjoyed going fast, Gaga preferred to take things slowly and enjoy



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city culture. He especially loved fashion! One time, he decided to get up from his seat in the front row of a show during London Fashion Week to introduce himself to the designer for an extremely prestigious fashion house to discuss the comeback of the bumbag. Unfortunately the designer mentioned that he had to source all his materials from one particular workshop, which was in – you guessed it – Ireland! Had it not been for Ace taking Gaga firmly by the hand and leading him back to his seat, they might still be standing there talking about the **Emerald Isle**.

So, with Gaga's charm and Gigi's intellect, Ace had learned early on that

it was up to him to be the sensible, level-headed one and that's what made them the perfect team.

Ace squirted maple syrup into the dipping bowl Gigi had placed next to his pancakes. He picked up his knife and fork, and cut into the whole stack of six pancakes to make the perfect pizza-slice triangle.

'The proof of the pudding is always in the eating,' guffawed Gaga, between sips of his third tea of the morning.

Ace had heard that saying a million times before, but Gaga was right. His favourite fruits were bananas and grapefruit, and Gigi had blended the perfect mix of banana and grapefruit

juice into the pancakes. The taste was **INCREDIBLE**. The tang of the tart grapefruit on his tongue mixed perfectly with the sweetness of overripe banana.

As he continued to munch on his breakfast, he looked up at the big gold clock on the wall and realized that he was going to be late for school. Ace hated being late because it meant he wouldn't be able to play football in the playground with his friends before lessons started, so he began eating at top speed – almost as if he was being powered by a jet-activation device!

As Ace was stuffing the final bit of pancake into his mouth, the doorbell rang. Gigi opened the door and, seeing that it

was Chris the postman, greeted him with one of her beautiful smiles.

‘Here you go,’ said Chris. ‘It’s a parcel for you, along with a couple of letters that you need to sign for – one’s addressed to you and the other’s for your Ace. He’ll have to open it when he’s back from school, I suppose.’

Knowing how much Ace hated being late, Chris was rather surprised to hear Ace half shout, half mumble a ‘hwwwwwey qqwwittttthhhh’ as he ran out of the kitchen and into the hallway.

‘I think you’d better get a move on, don’t you? You and me both!’ Chris laughed, turning and bouncing down the path before knocking at Number 13.



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Ace looked down at the large muddy-brown envelope. He hardly ever received post. Well, except when it was his birthday, and then it was mainly cards, of course. Ace contemplated leaving the letter until he returned home from school, but Gigi (who could be very impatient sometimes) said, ‘Oh my, Ace – they’re the same! They look very official! Go on – open it now. I’ll get you to school in a flash on the motorbike for a change.’

The truth was that Ace was also very curious about the letter, so he sat on the bottom step of the staircase and tore into the envelope that would change his life forever.

As he read the letter, his face scrunched

up in confusion. The words just didn't make any sense. Hoping that Gigi could understand it, he looked up at her to see her face turn a much lighter shade of brown. Her mouth rounded into an 'O' shape before she put a shaking hand over it. Ace started to feel really worried. *What was going on?*

Gaga sensed something was wrong too and made his way into the hallway. 'Are you two OK?'

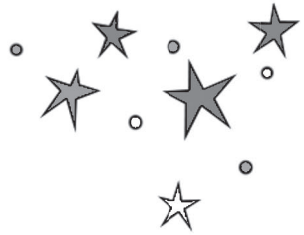
In a croaky voice, Gigi whispered, '*Ace, dear, you'd better sit down.*'

She'd forgotten that Ace was already sitting down and that it was her who required the seat. She swallowed hard as Gaga brought her a chair.

‘This is a letter from our lawyer,’ she said with tears in her eyes. ‘It’s addressed to us both because . . . my half-brother, your great-uncle, Hakim . . . has just died,’ Gigi concluded solemnly.



3



Ace had been too young to remember when his parents had died, just as Gigi had been too young to really remember her half-brother, Hakim. He was much older than she was – her father’s eldest son from his first marriage – and, because he’d been a highly respected pilot, he’d travelled a lot, so she didn’t hear from him regularly, although they had kept in touch through social media.

Gigi sat down at the kitchen table feeling overwhelmed by sadness and memories. She remembered how excited she had

been as a little girl when Hakim got his pilot's licence and took her for a ride in his Cessna 152 two-seater aeroplane.

Ace's voice broke through her memories. 'This letter can't be for me though. It's got the name **"Will"** on it,' said Ace, frowning in confusion.

Gaga looked more closely and, placing a hand on Ace's shoulder, he said, 'No, it's not addressed *to* Will; it *is* a will.'

Before he could say any more, Gigi spoke. 'A will is a legal document. Some people write one to make sure that, when they die, their possessions go to their loved ones. Your Great-Uncle Hakim was a pilot and his plane is assumed to have crashed over the Atlantic Ocean.'

Ace handed the document to Gaga. Turning the first page, Gaga read the words out loud:

‘This will is made by me, HAKIM FAROUK AKBAR, of 2223 Appleby Way, Jacksonville, Florida, United States of America. I appoint Carmen Judith George to be my executrix and trustee. I give my estate in Bellevue, Kent, to my great-nephew, Ace Sinclair.’

Ace’s head hurt. ‘What does that mean, Gigi?’

Before she could answer, Gaga said, ‘Look, Ace, there’s another letter attached to the will addressed to you.’

He handed it to Ace, who read it out:

Dear Ace,

How I wish I had taken the time to get to know you in person. Your Gigi has told me so much about you and she says you're the next in line to inherit the great George mind! Lucky boy!

She also mentioned that you love animals and have always wanted a pet of your own. I have a farm in Kent, which I'm now passing on to you.

In life, everything is not always as it seems. You should know that my animals are very special . . .

Ace was too shocked to read any more. He passed the letter to Gaga and sat open-mouthed as Gaga digested it, then explained that Ace's Great-Uncle Hakim had left him a six-bedroom farmhouse and several outbuildings in the

countryside, and a collection of British pound coins – one for every year since 1920. Gaga paused before reading the last line of the letter aloud.

‘Ace, you will only inherit this property if you choose to assume ownership within one week of receiving this letter!’

‘A week!’ Gigi shrieked loudly.

Ace didn’t know what to say. He wondered what the farmhouse looked like and who’d been looking after the animals while Great-Uncle Hakim had been away. He felt



bewildered and stunned by the news, but there was also another feeling beginning to glow inside him. He didn't recognize it at first, but as it glowed bigger and brighter he realized what it was. **Excitement!**

Ace had always felt a tiny bit jealous of his best friend, Kevin, who had two dogs – Charlie and Fliss. And Mr Jones from next door had a pet python, which was very cool – but Ace had just inherited an entire farm full of animals!

The excitement bubbling up inside him disappeared, however, when he thought of his friends and his house and just how much he loved living in the city. No more visits to the market and all the stallholders shouting, 'Pound a pound-a 'naaaaanas!'

over and over again. No more birthdays at the IMAX. No more missing their stop on the Tube because Gaga was chatting to commuters. Could he really leave the only place he'd ever called home?

Gaga looked over at Ace and could see his mind working furiously.



‘Come on, Ace. It’s time for school. We can talk about all this later.’

Gigi was in no fit state to ride after such upsetting news, so it was Gaga’s cherry-red sidecar that Ace jumped into. As they zipped along, Ace was so worried about making such a big decision that, for the first time, he didn’t even care that he was late for school.