

Mornings Topped with Sprinkles and Loss

By Katja Treadwell – Walt Whitman High School

Mornings at my grandparent's house began with *sprinkle-waffles*. My Farfar's¹ creation—rainbow sprinkles melted into golden batter, ladled into a sizzling waffle iron as their sweet scent wrapped like an arm around me. Sometimes, the sprinkles crowned the top, sometimes they nestled on the side—but their placement didn't matter. All I expected was to descend the stairs of their quaint brick home and be hit with the smell of cooking batter in Farfar's kitchen. With the sound of crescendoing classical music and the sight of pulpy orange juice sifting in green-glass stained cups, or the cookie tin filled with sewing supplies.

I sat with Farmor² and waited for the leavened batter to hit my plate, the music providing a score to her fluttering eyes and swaying fingers. When the tune finished with a hollow thump of the record player, the home was content, full of photographs of pudgy grandchildren tacked to the bulletin board and decades-old abstract paintings lining the walls. That was all I expected, but perhaps I expected too much.

I didn't question my parents when I visited the little brick home a little less often. At first, it felt like a temporary shift—slow weekends at the grandparents were filled with family errands and sports practices. But over time, I couldn't recall the taste of cakey sprinkles in my mouth or what Farmor was listening to. I begged to return, fearing that the source of my once-excitement could slip into a vague memory.

But it seemed to me even from the outside that the house was naked of the life it once harbored—the record player no longer hummed with warmth, as if to mourn its obsolescence, and the smell of cooking *sprinkle-waffles* was replaced with a faint medicinal tang as if to mock what I had taken for granted. When I stepped inside, Farfar was a shell of his former self, all droopy eyes and sunken skin. He was too sick to make the waffles, my parents told me. Eventually, he passed away in 2021.

Soon after, Farmor—who once swayed to the music—stared blankly ahead, her fluttering eyes replaced by an unreachable gaze. She could no longer eat the waffles, her mouth sewn shut with the cookie tin's threads. I naively believed she didn't speak because if she opened her mouth, a stream of dead memories too overwhelming to swallow would spill out. But I began to see that her remembrance had hazed as much as the comforting scent. Her house, my name, even her Farfar were lost to Alzheimer's.

I had begged to return, thinking I could preserve the mornings I once looked forward to. But those memories were already gone—buried beneath medical bills and loss. I still have trouble chewing the idea that nothing in life is finite, least of all the moments you thought would always last. Now, all I can cherish is the relic of time baked within my Farfar's *sprinkle-waffles*.

1: Grandfather in Danish

2: Grandmother in Danish