

## CHAPTER 7: Saying Goodbye

**W**hen we got out of the limo and went into Grampa Jack's house we were greeted by a bunch of smiling people. Most of them I didn't even know. They were all way too happy, considering we just said goodbye to Grampa Jack and buried him at the cemetery. There was music playing on the CD player, the same country music songs Grampa Jack used to listen to after dinner, and there was all this food: casseroles, watermelon, fruit salads, vegetable platters, potato chips, dry-roasted peanuts, tortilla chips, French onion dip, salsa, roast beef, ham, pretzels, little pieces of cheese on toothpicks, Pepsi for the kids and Moosehead beer, which was Grampa Jack's favorite, for the grownups.

It was like a party, but I wasn't in the mood to be at a party. I just wanted to be by myself. I was already halfway out the kitchen door in the back of the house when I turned around and said quietly, "Mom, I'm gonna go outside for a while."

Usually I ask her instead of tell her, but I didn't feel like getting permission from anyone for anything that day. Not even my mom. She was standing over the sink tossing a big green salad and surrounded by a whole bunch of people. She was too busy to say no.

"OK, honey," she said. She always calls me honey. "But stay in the backyard, and come back in when it gets dark, OK?"



I nodded and stepped out to the patio and sat down in the grass. I could still hear everyone inside laughing and telling stories about Grampa Jack, so I got up again and walked away from the house to the other end of the backyard where I couldn't hear anything but my thoughts and the birds. I stopped for a minute to look at Grandma Paulson's asparagus, tomatoes and onions, and then I walked over to the detached garage where Grampa Jack's workshop was.

It was starting to get cold and the garage door was closed and pad-locked. I had never seen a lock on that door before, and that freaked me out a little. But I wanted to see inside one last time, so I got up on my toes, cupped my hands against the dirty glass and looked through the small garage-door window. It was pretty dark inside but I could see some tools on top of the workbench. And there was the galleon.

I always used to just stare at it, study it, when I slept over. It's not as fragile as it looks but I was always afraid to touch it because I didn't want to rip or break it. It was one of Grampa Jack's prized possessions. He made it a few years before I was born, and it took him like a year to build, he once told me. It's really detailed and intricate. It looks just like the Wikipedia picture of what a galleon is supposed to look like. Not all galleons are Spanish, Grampa Jack told me. But this one is.

I must have stood there on my toes looking into that dark garage at that galleon for at least forty-five minutes, until it was totally dark and Mom called me back inside.

"Tyler, it's dark and it's getting cold out there," she yelled. "Tyler? Tyler?"

"OK, Mom, I'm coming."

Before I went back inside, I took one last look into the garage, took a deep breath and said softly, so no one else could hear, "Bye, Grampa Jack." No one heard me. But I like to think Grampa Jack did. I just think he did somehow. It was a better goodbye than the one I said to him at the funeral parlor earlier. It felt to me like he was listening this time. I actually think his spirit was in that garage, not in that dead body that was lying in that coffin. That wasn't Grampa anymore.



## SNOWMAN ON THE PITCHER'S MOUND

For the rest of that night I couldn't stop thinking about the galleon. After we got home and got out of our funeral clothes I went into my parents' room, and before I said good night I asked my dad a very important question: "Do you think I could have Grampa Jack's galleon?"

He looked pleased that I asked. "OK, buddy." Dad always calls me buddy. "But on one condition: You have to promise me you'll take good care of it. It meant a lot to your grandfather, as you know. It means a lot to me, too, and to everyone. Do you promise me you'll take care of it?"

I promised, and I've kept that promise. It's still sitting right there on my dresser, in one piece and making cool silhouette shadows with the moonlight on my wall.

