

THE BUTTON BOX

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“Grandma, can we look at the Button Box?” asked Amy, as she sat on the bed while her grandmother folded the laundry.

Grandma smiled and took the Button Box down off the bureau. “Don’t you ever get tired of looking at these buttons?”

“No, Grandma! I love the stories they tell.”

Amy and Grandma snuggled on the bed as Grandma opened the box. Her long, wrinkled fingers lovingly lifted out each one. “You must know all of them by now,” she said, “but there is still room in here for more stories.”

Amy picked up a button. It was gold and sewn onto a swatch of green wool. “This is my favorite story, Grandma.”

“Mine, too,” replied her grandmother, as she lovingly caressed the piece of cloth from her husband’s WWII military jacket. “Grandpa looked so fine in his uniform standing there on the train platform, come home on leave for Christmas. He took me to the USO dancing.” Her eyes misted over and a soft smile came to her lips as she became lost in remembering.

“That’s the night he asked you to marry him, right?” asked Amy.

“You know the answer already, silly girl.”

“Oh, but I never get tired of hearing this button story.”

Grandma gently put the button down on the bed and reached for another. “Here’s the button from your momma’s christening gown. Can you believe she was just a tiny baby once?”

Amy laughed, “I can’t think of mommy as a baby!”

Gingerly, button after button was taken out of the box, story after story told, and the morning flew by.

“One day, this box will be yours and so will all the stories in it,” Grandma said as she put the Button Box away.

“Then I can add my own, new stories, right, Grandma?”

“Yes, I am sure you will have many stories to add one day. Now, come help me wrap some Christmas presents. It’s less than a week away! Where does the time go?”

The rest of the day was spent wrapping presents and making cookies.

That night, Amy asked her mother, “Mommy, can I have a button off some of my old clothes and a piece of each?”

“Why?” asked her mother.

“For Grandma’s Christmas present. I want to add new stories to the Button Box for her.”

The next day, Amy and her mother chose three buttons. One button came from the outfit Amy came home from the hospital in, another from the jumper she wore the first day of school, and the third came from her christening gown.

“This one is going to join your story, though I still can’t think of you as a baby.” Amy and her mother laughed.

Amy’s mother cut a small swatch of cloth from each outfit and sewed the button onto it. Amy placed them in a small box and wrapped it. “I’ll put it under the tree tonight, after we decorate it,” Amy said. “Grandma will be so happy when she opens it!”

That evening, Grandma came to help decorate the Christmas tree. She brought brightly wrapped presents for Amy and her parents. Amy shook hers.

“What’s in it?”

Grandma laughed. “You’ll find out in just a few days.” Then, she picked up her present from Amy. “What’s in it?”

“You’ll find out in just a few days.” Amy, her parents, and Grandma laughed.

The night was spent in laughter, singing Christmas carols and drinking hot chocolate around the Christmas tree. It was hard for Amy to fall asleep that night. *I wonder what my present is. I can hardly wait for Christmas to come.*

When Amy woke up and went down for breakfast the next morning she found her mother and father crying at the kitchen table.

“Grandma is in the hospital, she had a heart attack last night. The doctors said we can visit later today.”

Amy and her parents visited Grandma every day, but she never woke up.

On Christmas Eve Amy asked, “Can I bring Grandma her Christmas present, she always comes over to open one on Christmas Eve.”

“Of course,” said her parents.

Amy wore her Christmas dress. It was red with a white collar. Her grandmother had bought it for her to wear to Christmas dinner. At the hospital, Amy unwrapped the buttons and told her grandmother the stories.

“This one is from when I came home from the hospital,” Amy said. She placed a small white button, sewn on to a dinosaur print, in Grandma’s hand.

Her grandmother’s hand closed over it. That night, she passed away.

On Christmas morning, Amy and her parents sat on the couch. The Christmas tree lights blinked brightly, but there was no Christmas cheer to be found. Amy buried her face into her mother’s shoulder while she held her father’s hand and cried.

“Mommy, can I open Grandma’s present?”

Amy’s mother nodded.

Amy reached for the brightly wrapped package and then sat between her parents and read the tag.

“To Amy, who loves my stories. Love, Grandma”

Amy carefully peeled off the tape and slowly unwrapped the present. “Oh, Mommy! Daddy! It’s the Button Box.”

Amy opened the box and reached for a button and stopped. For there, on top of all the others, were three new buttons—one from her coming home outfit, one from her first day of school jumper, and one from her christening gown.

Amy’s mother and father exchanged confused looks.

“How...?” Amy’s parents said in unison.

Amy smiled, “Because it’s Christmas.”

Then, Amy took out a gold button sewn into a piece of green wool. “Want to hear some stories?” she asked.

Her parents nodded. Amy snuggled in closer to both.

“This one is my favorite.”