

ALLISON WEISSMAN

CHRONOMETRY

I am painting a clock when Daddy tells me Grandpa is dying. It's a blank, fabric face as big as the dining table: a sousaphone cover for the marching band. This year's show theme is chronometry, which means the science of time. Daddy won't say the word "dying." He keeps calling it "pancreatic cancer which worries me even more because Daddy hasn't read *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch five times like I have. He doesn't know his daddy will be dead soon, and I don't know how to tell him, so I don't.

Daddy thinks something is wrong with me. I haven't said anything in several minutes, not since he said, "Grandpa has pancreatic cancer," and now he's telling me again, "Allie, Grandpa has pancreatic cancer. Did you hear me?"

My hands are shaking, painting my Roman numerals. I say, "How long?" without looking up, and Daddy goes quiet.

When he leaves, I get hot tears on my clock. It's sad, really. When Grandpa dies for real, I won't shed a single one.



In November, we fly to Florida to say goodbye to Grandpa. He is thinner now, and his fingers are like crowbars, but he still reads the newspaper. He still tells me I eat like a bird, like he did when I was seven.

One night, when Grandpa is feeling good, we take him out for dinner. I don't remember what we eat, but the old town is lit up with Christmas lights, glass bulbs bundled from the palm trees like stars. Under the lights of Heaven, Daddy makes us pose for our last pictures with Grandpa.

We walk around for a while then, and Grandpa asks me what classes I'm taking in school. I tell him I'm in honors and APs, expecting him to be proud