

Lost Brown Coat: Huge Sentimental Value by Jane Porter

The day of Grandad's funeral, the sun shone harshly. Casey squinted up angrily, pushing her hands right down in the pockets of the old brown sheepskin coat. It was the one Grandad had always worn since she was small, and it still had the Grandad smell - a little bit bonfire, a little bit hair oil. There was even still a toffee in the pocket - something they always shared together. Grandad would offer them around to anyone near, on the bus, in the park, on the pier.

'Casey, you can't go to the funeral in that old thing,' said Mum.

'I can,' snapped Casey, 'and I will.' Why did missing Grandad make her feel so furious?

Mum sighed, and muttered 'pick your battles' to herself. 'Come on, we need to get going.'

After the service, there were sandwiches, and suffocating small talk, and everything seemed to be shouting 'Grandad's gone'. Casey couldn't stand it any longer, so she grabbed the coat and ran all the way to the park. She lay on her back in the wooded area, switching between kicking at a log and crying, until it was dark.

Mum was cross of course - a fierce sad-furious that Casey couldn't bear to see. She stomped to her bedroom and slammed the door. It was only when Casey was lying in bed that she remembered: the coat. She had left it behind!

Early next morning, Casey and Mum searched the park. 'I know how much that coat meant to you,' said Mum. 'I miss him too, you know,' and she hugged Casey tight. Casey leaned on Mum's shoulder a moment, and the angry feeling faded a little bit. But the coat wasn't under the trees, or any where else either. 'Let's make a poster,' said Mum. 'We'll offer a reward.'

Casey laminated the posters, and tied them to lamp posts, and to the railings in the park. But days turned to weeks, and no one called to say they had found it.

One day, just as the leaves started yellowing and the air turned colder, Casey bought a bag of the toffees Grandad had always liked. She unwrapped one outside the shop, and thought about how the taste made her feel safe. And that's when she saw it – the brown sheepskin coat. It was being worn by a sad, pale young woman, sitting on the pavement in the high street, with a paper cup of coins at her feet.

'Spare any change?' she whispered as Casey approached. It didn't sound like a question that expected an answer.

Casey stopped and stared. She felt hot and sweaty. Some words started to shape up in her mouth – 'that's MY coat' – but they dried up before coming out. She could hear Grandad's voice in her ears. 'Go on, love, give her a toffee.' Casey held out the bag. 'Here, have these,' she said. 'Nice coat!'

'Thanks,' said the young woman, with just a tiny bit of a smile. 'It's warm.'

And Grandad's voice in Casey's head said, 'That's my girl' – just like he always used to.

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