

The Chair

by Michelle Elvy

"It's time to move the chair," said Grandma matter-of-factly. I knew what she meant: time to put the old green easy-chair on the curb, the one with the saggy seat and fraying arms, the one which smelled of oil and sweat and Old Spice and also old age and even faintly of forbidden cigarette smoke. I knew it was time to take it away but dreaded it. That chair had been Grandpa's favorite. I came home from school every day and found him sitting in his chair. After short happy days at primary school, I would climb into his lap and read him books about farm animals. In later years, I scratched my homework notes sitting cross-legged at the coffee table while he concentrated on crosswords. "Maisy, what's the world's tallest building?" he might ask. The chair was as constant in my life as Grandpa. Prom dates were cross-examined, college friends were greeted from it, occasionally asked, "seven-letter word for hairy?" Once I was lectured about smoking from the chair, but I knew Grandpa occasionally snuck outside to grab a Pall Mall — I'd discovered his pack hidden in the coffee table drawer way back during my algebra years.

In the end, the hospital trips were dreadful, the funeral was bitter. But removing the green chair was my least favorite task. I rescued Grandpa's last pack of Pall Malls from the coffee table drawer, half-carried and half-pushed the chair across the lawn, and chain-smoked his cigarettes 'til dark.

