



**A short story by  
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Juliette couldn't help but laugh at Carlo's expression as he crossed the lawns between the bungalows.

He waved a hand to take it all in. "This isn't a retirement village." He struggled to find words, "it's more like, I don't know, a royal estate."

"Nanna Faye's is right at the end by the putting green." Juliette pointed out the larger residence that stood a little apart from the others, in a garden of its own shaded by ghost gums.

Carlo grunted. "The penthouse suite."

"Nooo," Juliette insisted, but it wasn't a bad description.

Her grandmother's housekeeper let them in. "Good afternoon, Juliette. Is this Carlo? Mrs Wainwright's so looking forward to meeting you. She's in the sunroom."

"Here we go then," Carlo said.

Juliette let the diamond on the third finger of her left hand catch the light. "You have to meet Nanna Faye now. It's a right of passage."

He sniffed at the musty old furniture crammed into every space but gawked at the artwork. "Is that a Turner? No, it couldn't be."

A misty pastiche of industrial England. Juliette shrugged. "I don't know. Nanna likes it."

The lady of the house sat in a bright patch among potted ferns.

Juliette kissed her cheek, whispering, "look at you in your best pearls and lipstick."

Nanna Faye batted her hand away. "Good afternoon, Carlo. I'm sorry, I can't stand." She gestured to her wheelchair.

Carlo shook her hand. "Juliette's told me all about you."

"I hope not! A lady should have some secrets. Where's Phoebe? Go and find her." She waved towards the kitchen.

Carlo jumped to do her bidding.

"What's this all about?" Juliette asked.

"You'll see." Anna Faye watched Carlo out of sight before she winked at her granddaughter. "He's a nice-looking boy. One of the department store Togninis?"

Juliette nodded.

"Ah, here's Phoebe."

The housekeeper swept into the sunroom, balancing a chilled bottle of Veuve Clicquot and glasses on a silver tray.

"A toast," Nanna Faye said.

Juliette ignored the Champagne and picked up a glass. "This is the family crystal."

"Absolutely."

"But it's your greatest treasure!"

"And it's to be used. Important family occasions demand it."

Phoebe poured and handed around the age-dulled flutes with exaggerated care.

Carlo held his up to the light to admire the craftsmanship, his eyebrows bunched.

"To young love," Nanna Faye said, "and great-grandchildren. I want at least four before I'm done, Carlo. Now, young man, where did you go to school?"

Juliette topped up his glass. He'd need alcohol.

An hour later, Juliette called a halt.

Carlo did well under the onslaught. He told stories that made Nanna Faye giggle like a teenage girl, but her hand had started to tremble the way it did when she was tired, not that Juliette's Nanna would ever admit to frailty.

Carlo rounded off a gold medal performance by collecting the glasses and taking everything to the kitchen before Juliette could call Phoebe.

"What do you think, Nanna?" Juliette asked when they were alone.

Carlo worked late the next two nights on plans to expand the Tognini chain into Queensland. Juliette had her own dramas preparing submissions for a Supreme Court hearing, so they didn't meet again until the following Wednesday, at Domenico's, Carlo's favourite restaurant.

He stood up for a kiss, waited until the waiter had dealt with Juliette's chair and napkin, then produced an item from his jacket and plonked it on the table between them.

A champagne flute.

"Is that ...?" Juliette asked.

"One of your Nanna's. Yes."

“Why on earth ...?”

“I had it tested. It’s plain glass, not even crystal.”

“Carlo!”

He reached for her wrist. “It’s important. This is your inheritance —”

“My dad’s!”

“You know what I mean. If the assets are worthless and your grandma spends all the cash on that fancy palace and domestic staff, you could end up with nothing. Get everything valued. You’ll thank me.”

Juliette hurried to Nanna Faye’s the next morning, as guilty about lying to a senior partner to get a couple of hours off work as she was about the fiasco with the champagne flute.

In her favourite pink shell suit, Nanna Faye had the morning paper spread over her lap and Sky News blaring.

“Coffee?” Juliette asked.

“No thanks.” Nanna Faye grinned. “I’ve had my dose for the day.”

“Well, I haven’t. I’ll get it.” Juliette dived into the kitchen, slipped the glass out of her purse and put it behind the others in the cabinet.

*Mission accomplished.*

She felt five kilos lighter without stolen property weighing her down.

“You decided against coffee,” Nanna said as Juliette sank into the sofa next to her wheelchair.

“Oh, err ...”

“How’s Carlo?” Nanna asked.

“Oh, fine.”

“That doesn’t sound good. Trouble in paradise?”

Juliette slumped. “He took one of the crystal glasses to get it tested. It’s not crystal, by the way.”

Nanna cackled. “Do you think my grandpapa could afford crystal when he started the business? He loved those glasses. We made a joke of it, ‘the family crystal’.”

“It’s not a joke,” Juliette said.

“No. It holds all my fondest memories. We drank from those glasses when *your* grandfather proposed to *me*. At our wedding. When your father was born. When he brought your mum home. When you arrived, and your brothers. I hoped your mother would cherish them, but she doesn’t want anything she hasn’t earned.” Nanna Faye smiled. “Your father picked well. You’re very like your mum, except you’ll look after the crystal, won’t you?”

Juliette nodded. She couldn’t say anything for fear her voice would break.

“Carlo is not the one, is he?” Nanna asked.

“No.” Juliette sighed.

“When you two arrived, he went straight to the paintings. Did you see? The Togninis are all money-grubbers. Juliette, you will find a man you can’t live without. He might not be well-off like Carlo, but that won’t matter. You’ll have enough money for both of you.”

“Well, I am a lawyer.”

“That doesn’t matter. I’ll make sure you have all you need.”

“I don’t want *your* money!”

“I know. That’s why I’m giving it to you.”

“Pardon?”

“Your dad and your brothers will get their share. There’s plenty to go around. You’ll get a little less than the others, plus the contents of this house.”

“Err, Nanna. I’m not sure an estate that —“

She winked. “The will says ‘in addition: to Juliette, I leave all the *old* things in my house because she loves them’.”

“I do love the crystal. We’ll drink from it at every major event, and I’ll pass the tradition to my children.”

“Good. If you need cash, get rid of some pictures or a table. What did Carlo say about the furniture?” Her lips twisted into a mischievous grin.

“Nothing.”

“I’m surprised. His type can usually spot gold a mile away. Of course, I have no idea about its value.” She winked again. “If I ever did, I’ve forgotten. Alzheimer’s.”

“Nanna, you are terrible!”

“I’ve always tried to be!”

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