

Name: _____

The Queen of the Night

by Anita N. Amin

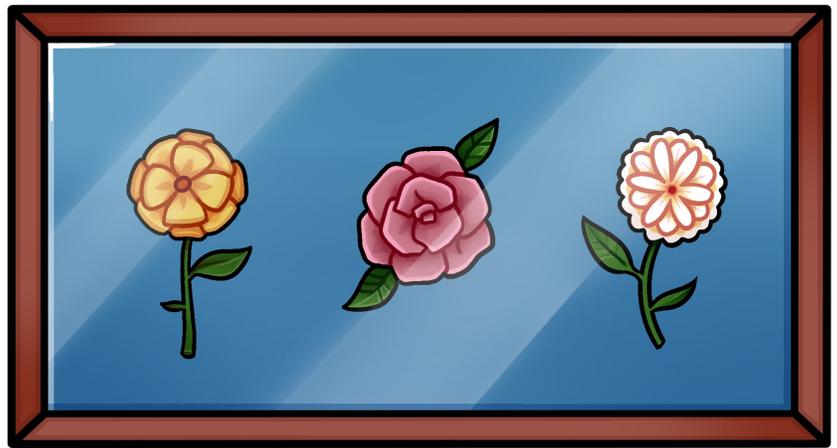
Grandma stared out her bedroom window. "No flowers, no trees - just concrete and cars. Time to go home." Her cane rapped the floor as she turned to face Madison and Dad.

"This is your home now," Dad said.

"And you've got lots of squished flowers." Madison pointed to the artwork Grandma had brought from her old home. Frames and frames of squished flowers sat upright on the floor against the wall.

"Pressed flowers, Madison."

Grandma pinched a flower off her windowsill violet. She showed Madison how to flatten the blossom in an encyclopedia. "So the flower's beauty stays forever."



Later that week, as Madison skipped home from school, she was about to hop over a sidewalk crack and avoid years of bad luck, when she saw a wildflower poking out.

She uprooted the flower and pressed it at home. A week later, the petals were flat, brittle, and delicate like the butterfly wing she had once found on a school trip at the botanical gardens. She gently lifted the pressed flower and glued it onto paper. She framed it with cardboard and presented it to Grandma.

"It's lovely." Grandma studied it.

"I was thinking..." Madison told Grandma about the botanical gardens. The next day, they took a train there.

Grandma smiled one minute, harrumphed the next. She stopped to inspect some ivy-

wrapped trees. "They remind me of the Queen of the Night," she said. "I haven't missed her show in fifty years – until now."

Just then, the manager stopped to welcome them.

But Grandma proceeded to advise him on how to take better care of his gardens.

"We could really use your expertise," he said, offering her a volunteer job.

"I'll consider it," Grandma said.

That evening, Grandma phoned her best friend. They talked about a lot of things, including maybe volunteering at the gardens.

"Will she visit us some time?" Madison asked after Grandma had hung up.

Grandma shook her head. "I don't think so. The drive is too hard."

"Then I'll help you make new friends here." Over the next few weeks, Madison invited her friends' families over, and Dad even took Grandma to a gardening club.

"Do you like your new friends?" Madison asked Grandma at the end of the month.

"I like all of my friends," Grandma replied. "Old and new."

A few weeks later, Dad announced, "We're going to Grandma's old house. The realtor wants to meet with us."

They drove past skyscrapers, then pastures. Finally, their car kicked up a cloud of gray dust as it wobbled and crunched down Grandma's gravel driveway.

The realtor was inside, reviewing a list. "We have a buyer with a list of demands."

Grandma stopped smiling. While Dad and the realtor talked, she drifted from room to room, her cane sinking into the carpet. Her fingers brushed a wall, a countertop, as she looked around and sighed.

The screen door creaked open, and Grandma wandered outside. Madison followed, tiny moths fluttering up out of the weeds.

Dad and the realtor were studying a vine-covered tree.

"The vine will have to go," the realtor said, checking her list.

Grandma frowned. "The Queen of the Night? We can't destroy it! One night a year, this cactus is covered with the most beautiful white, fragrant blossoms. They're as big as

honeydews. People come from miles to watch them bloom.”

Grandma shook her head. “My grandmother passed this treasure down. I wanted my son and granddaughter to have it, but there’s no room in the city.”

“Maybe there *is* room,” Madison said, a thought suddenly striking her. “At the botanical gardens! But how do we take this whole vine there?”

“We don’t - we just need part of it.” Grandma snapped a piece of cactus off and wrapped it in her handkerchief.

The next day, they visited the manager at the botanical gardens.

When he seemed unsure, Madison continued, “You could have a fundraiser and sell stem cuttings...”

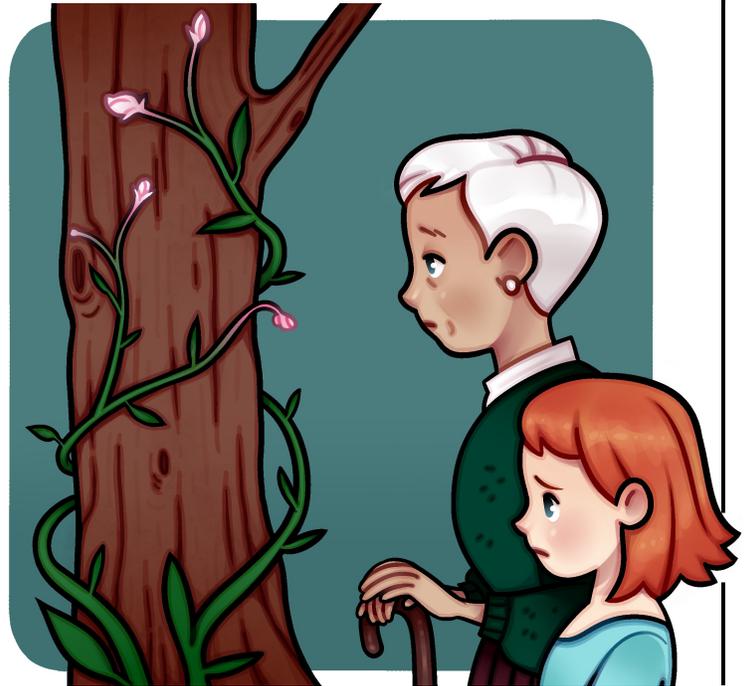
A spark of excitement lit the manager’s eyes. “A fundraiser? That’s a great idea!”

So that afternoon, Grandma and Madison planted the Queen of the Night cutting in a special spot in the gardens.

Madison gave the dirt a final pat.

“Maybe we can press one of the flowers when it blooms. You know, so it stays forever.”

Grandma nodded. She stared down for a while. Finally, she brushed off her hands. “Time to plant new roots,” she said and her cane clicked across the pavement as they headed home.



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1. In the beginning of the story, how does Grandma feel about her new home in the city?

2. Based on what you read in the story, describe one of Grandma's interests.

3. Is it easy for Grandma to keep in touch with her old friends? Why or why not?

4. Why do Dad, Madison, and Grandma go back to Grandma's house in the country?

5. At the end of the story, Grandma says, "Time to plant new roots." What does she mean when she says this?

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Fill in the missing letters to form a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. f__a__r__n__
hint: having a sweet or pleasant smell

2. __nc__cl____edi__
hint: book that provides information on a variety of subjects

3. b__i__tl__
hint: subject to breaking or shattering easily

4. __ot__n__c__l__g__r__en__
hint: places where plants are cultivated for public view and scientific study

5. __un__ra__s____
hint: an event held to raise money for a cause, charity, or organization

6. e__p____ti__e
hint: expert knowledge

7. h__n____er__hie__
hint: a small square of fabric that serves the same purpose as a tissue

8. __eal__o__
hint: real estate agent

ANSWER KEY

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1. In the beginning of the story, how does Grandma feel about her new home in the city?

Grandma feels discontent. She doesn't feel at home. She wants to go back to her home.

2. Based on what you read in the story, describe one of Grandma's interests.

Answers will vary. Grandma is interested in pressed flowers. Grandma likes gardening and her new garden club. Grandma likes the Queen of the Night flower.

3. Is it easy for Grandma to keep in touch with her old friends? Why or why not?

It is not very easy for Grandma to keep in touch with her old friends. She calls her best friend on the phone, but the distance between them makes it too hard for a visit.

4. Why do Dad, Madison, and Grandma go back to Grandma's house in the country?

They go back to Grandma's house in the country to meet with the realtor who is helping them sell her house.

5. At the end of the story, Grandma says, "Time to plant new roots." What does she mean when she says this?

When Grandma says this, she means it's time for her to start getting used to her new home.

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hint: having a sweet or pleasant smell
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hint: book that provides information on a variety of subjects
3. brittle brittle
hint: subject to breaking or shattering easily
4. botanical gardens botanical gardens
hint: places where plants are cultivated for public view and scientific study
5. fundraiser fundraiser
hint: an event held to raise money for a cause, charity, or organization
6. expertise expertise
hint: expert knowledge
7. handkerchief handkerchief
hint: a small square of fabric that serves the same purpose as a tissue
8. realtor realtor
hint: real estate agent