

**2026 Elie Wiesel Competition**

**Special Commendation (Tie), Junior Poetry**

Kiley Farris, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Old Donation School, Lisa Kilczewski

***Grandma's Candle***

Grandma's candle is lit and burning bright in the center of the room

I sit on the worn leather couch

The feeling of the cold rips against my skin

The smell of grandma's perfume ripples through the air, taking control

Flowers in a field, surrounded by a calm stream

Her necklace jingles as she bends

She hands me a sparkling cherry gem on a weathered golden band

Slips it onto my innocent, bony finger

Her old bones don't bend like they used to when she was a blooming flower

Long before I came into the world

Her hair sticks straight up in perfect curls like the grayish brown rings around Saturn

Her wrinkles are like small patterns drawn in sand

Her nails always sugar plum pink and glimmering in the afternoon sun

She places a papery fingertip on the crimson stone, another on my shoulder

She speaks with such ease and kindness

Her words wiser than any

"This is what my grandmother gave me. Figured your mama wanted you to have it."

She smiles and the room dances with the golden glow radiating from her lit up face

Grandma told all the stories a young, curious girl could ask for

A woman fighting for her life in the military

A brave young man who sailed across the seas just to marry his bride

A spontaneous travel of an unknown world

Everything

She was a living, breathing storybook, a fairytale

She filled me to the brim with knowledge and stories

One more and they all would just spill out of the crystal glass

So, I could tell my grandchildren and they could tell theirs

She squeezed me tight and tucked me in

She slept next to me to prove a nap was good

There was no feeling sad around grandma

She would just tell me another story about my great aunt

But now I'm older, I tuck myself in

But not by choice, because there is one issue

Grandma put on her pretty church dress

Followed the soft glow that once burned bright but now melted softly away

Like the last few seconds of dripping wax from a finished candle

The glow from her face shines elsewhere now

Her candle here extinguished, the smoke whirling around like the northern lights

I tried to catch it all for myself

But I knew it was best left spread out into the world, for everyone to breath in

She tells stories to other curious souls now

Old, young, naive, smart

She still tells me stories

I can't hear them, but she does, I know it

The golden ring still imprints my finger and the jewel shines more than ever

The sad leather couch sits in darkness every day

It knows more stories than anyone else does

Except grandma

It's dark

But the candle isn't gone

No, fate just came and blew the flame away into the atmosphere

The smoke still lingers

For everyone

Inhale

Remember

Pass it on.