

# Illuminated by Love

Author: Alyson Jones

Grade: 7

Teacher: Kelli Jones

School: Blair Oaks Middle School, Jefferson City, MO

The moment I stepped out of the car, I read, “North Adams Home.” My heart was racing. The palms of my hands felt sweaty, yet I shivered as if it were cold outside. So many questions sunk into my skin. What would he think when he saw me? Would he like me? Would he recognize me? They replayed over and over, like a song stuck in my head. I opened the entrance door silent, gently, uncertain of what the surroundings would reveal. The appearance was the same as any nursing home, yet something made it different than any nursing home I have ever visited. This nursing home held a special patient.

My dad was abandoned by his dad, leaving me without a grandpa. I heard very little information about my grandpa’s whereabouts or if he was even alive. Never knowing my grandpa for that many years, I was clueless where to start my search. I wish my journey to get to the “North Adams Home” was simple. I was determined to find this man, no matter how long it took.

My first thought was to check to see if this mission was possible. I didn’t want to waste my time trying to find a dead man. My dad’s best friend was a mortician where they both had lived. I texted him, and within minutes, I found out grandpa was still alive, the only information I had at the time. All I knew was that I still had hope to meet my long-lost grandpa.

After digging around on the computer, I soon discovered my dad’s half-sister lived in the same town where my dad grew up. Immediately, I got her phone number and prepared to call. The more I thought about it the more nervous I got. I was afraid she would hang up. Dialing the number took me about 30 minutes, but I finally got the nerve. She was so nice to me. She shared the same desire for our families to be a part of each other’s lives. We talked for about an hour. When I got off the phone, I had information that led me to Jean, Grandpa’s wife and my dad’s stepmother.

I felt I was getting closer and closer. I didn’t want anything to get in my way now. I slowly paced around, practicing what I would say. My heart was beating, but I gathered my thoughts and took a deep breath. I held my breath and started dialing the numbers. The calling tone seemed never-ending. My hopes were beginning to lower. Finally, an older lady answered. “Hello,” the lady snarled. I whispered, “H-h-h-hi, my names is Alyson Jones.” The lady didn’t reply. I was anxious to hear her next comment, when suddenly, I was left with the worst answer. Beep-beep-beep! She hung up on me.

A few weeks went by, and I was still didn’t know what to do. One evening, I received a call from an unknown number. I wasn’t sure if I wanted to answer a call from someone I didn’t know, but something told me to do it anyway. I pressed the big green button and said, “Hello.” An energetic woman answered, “Hi sweetie! This is Mary Jean Jones. I am your step-grandmother.”

She sounded like a whole different person. She had a high-pitched, warm-hearted voice. We talked and shared our life stories. She gave me all the information I needed to know, like that they lived in Mendon, Illinois, but not together. She was living in a small apartment. He was living in a nursing home after suffering from a severe stroke. The news was shocking, but stroke or not, he was still my grandpa, and I wanted to meet him.

I convinced my parents to take me to Mendon. I was nervous the entire seven hour drive, but we finally arrived. The moment I stepped out of the car I read, “North Adams Home.” I knew I was at the right place! I quickly found his room on the second floor and couldn’t believe I was actually standing in front of the door that held my long-lost grandfather. I knocked on the door before slowly entering the small area. An older man was lying in a bed. The first thing I noticed was how much he looked like my dad. My grandpa looked at me from head to toe. I gave him a graceful smile and looked him square in the eye and said, “I love you grandpa.” He had little movement and no words. He flashed me a quick grin, and I saw a tear travel down his cheek. After twelve years of having a missing piece of my life, everything was put together.