MR NOBODY

MR NOBODY

BY
NATALIE
GORDON

Dedication
For Millie, my first reader

Also available by Natalie Gordon for readers aged 7+
King Worm Jack

First published in 2014
by Natalie Gordon

This second edition published in 2022

Copyright © Natalie Gordon 2022

All rights reserved
Unauthorised duplication contravenes existing laws

The right of Natalie Gordon to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-7397436-1-1

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders and obtain permission to reproduce this material.

Designed and typeset by
Carnegie Scotforth Book Production

1. Mum and Dad tell us "The News"

'Katie! Are you listening to me?'

I stopped eating and looked at Mum. I hadn't heard her because I'd been thinking about school today. Carys had been all mean again and Anna had joined in, so me and Molly hid by the bushes for the whole of lunch break. It was kind of nice in the end, especially when Molly started doing impressions of the teachers. She did a really funny one of Mrs. Jackson with a Scooby Doo voice and we couldn't stop laughing. Then Carys found us. She thought we were laughing at her and went off in a strop. She was always going off in a strop. It was so annoying.

'I said, I have some news.'

Mum looked stressed and Lou was giving me her Look, the one where she puts her head to one side and smirks. She was always giving one of us the Look. She used to be fun, but not anymore: too busy flicking her hair around or texting her boyfriend, Max.

'Your gran is coming to stay with us for a bit.'

Lou stopped smirking at me and stared at Mum, like she'd said something nasty to us.

'You mean *your* mum?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, great.'

Lou pulled a face. She didn't get on with Mum's mum. Gran always said stuff that annoyed Lou. Maybe that was why I liked her.

'I'm picking her up at the weekend. She's going to live with us for a while.'

'Why? Is she ill, Mum?' I asked.

'Yes, Katie, she is kind of ill.'

'What's wrong with her?'

'It's just old age. She can't look after herself properly anymore.'

So, she wasn't really ill then, just old. But old people get older, so she wasn't going to get any better at looking after herself, was she?

Lou must have been thinking the same as me, because then she said, 'Well, if she's coming because she's old, she's never going to go home again, is she? Why do *we* have to have her? Why can't Aunty Sal look after her?'

Sometimes, I liked having an older sister to ask the questions I didn't dare ask. Just sometimes, though.

'Lou!' snapped Dad.

That was in Dad's teacher voice, with a proper teacher stare to go with it. Lou hated that he taught at her school. I didn't think Dad could like it much either – it couldn't be much fun when all the other teachers came to tell him how annoying his daughter was.

'Aunty Sal can't look after her,' said Mum, 'she has enough on her plate with the twins. She's my mother, she needs help and I'm not going to abandon her hundreds of miles away to fend for herself.'

She was Aunty Sal's mum too, but Mum was probably better at looking after her because she was a nurse.

'You don't have to *abandon* her.' Lou muttered. 'I just meant, well, there must be something else we can do, like get her some help in her own home. And anyway, we haven't got a spare bedroom for her. Where are you going to put her?'

Dad reached over and took Mum's hand, squeezing it while he glared at Lou. 'Firstly, we're not *putting* her anywhere. She's coming to stay with us. Secondly, this isn't a negotiation. We are going to help your gran because she's family and because your mother and I thought that you two would be old enough and mature enough to understand that we have to do this. We were obviously wrong about that.'

'Yeah, obviously.' Lou slumped back in her chair and crossed her arms in front of her, looking with her Evil Eyes at Mum and Dad.

Dad ignored her and turned to me. 'Katie, you're unusually quiet?'

I shrugged. I didn't know what to say. I didn't really understand what all the fuss was about or why everyone was getting so cross. It was just Gran and she wouldn't be here for ever.

Lou was still giving them her Evil Look when she asked, 'So how long *is* she going to stay with us, then?'

It was Mum's turn to answer now. She sounded tired. 'We don't know. She probably won't go back to her own house again.'

Oh. Maybe she would be here for ever. I wasn't sure how I felt about that. I watched Lou as she told mum and dad exactly how she felt. Like she always did.

'You can't do this. Why didn't you tell us before? I mean, yesterday there was nothing wrong with her, and today she's so incapable of looking after herself you're going to get her at the weekend. Why's it so sudden? Why didn't you tell us before literally the day you're about to get her?'

Lou shared the angry popping out eyes thing with Dad and her eyes were really big and popping now. It was a good question, though, why hadn't they told us before?

'We didn't tell you before,' said Mum, 'because we didn't want to worry you, and we only finally decided today. Gran's got worse in the last few weeks and really needs to be somewhere we can keep an eye on her. We can't leave it any longer.'

They could still have told us before today. And they hadn't explained where she was going to sleep. We didn't have a spare room, not like Carys who had a spare room and a playroom and a conservatory, even though she didn't have any brothers or sisters. We had an average kind of house, with just the right amount of room for us.

Lou looked at Mum and again asked the question that was in my head. 'So, where's Gran going to sleep?'

'Well, it's not forever, but you two will have to share. Katie, you'll move into Lou's room.'

Mum stopped and looked at us. I didn't know what Lou's face looked like at that moment, because I couldn't

tear my eyes away from Mum. I was willing her words to go back into her mouth somehow, so she could swallow them back down. She couldn't have really meant what she just said.

'I know it's not ideal, but there is no other way.'

I couldn't speak.

Lou screamed at Mum. 'There is no way that I am *ever* sharing my room with *her*.'

She jabbed her finger at me and jumped up from the table, knocking her chair over.

'There's no way. Why can't Gran go into an old people's home or something? It's not happening. You can't do this!'

I wished for once that they would listen to her, because I couldn't see how I could possibly share a room with Lou. I felt sick at the thought of it. I liked my own space. My room was perfect. I loved it. It was all green and white apart from the orange shooting stars on my duvet cover. I had everything just where I wanted it. There was my desk where I did my drawings, with the art set I got for Christmas, which had loads of different pencils and pens and highlighters and opened out into three different levels. I had my picture frames all around my walls with all my own art in them, my squishy turquoise beanbag next to my bookcase where I would curl up for hours with a book if I could, and my bed with the cuddly toys I'd had since I was little. It wouldn't all fit in Lou's room. I started to cry.

'Look at her. She's a baby. I'm *not* sharing with her.'

Lou stormed out of the room.

'You come back down here and apologise to your sister. It's not all about you.'

Dad was wrong. It *was* all about Lou. It was always all about her. I knew that better than Dad did. I was really crying now. Mum came over and hugged me into her chest. I let her, but secretly I was mad with her. I buried my head in her fleecy jumper and cried some more. I felt hot and angry and upset and mad and scared, all mixed up and ready to burst like Mr. Braithwaite's volcano experiment. Worst of all I felt like someone somewhere had taken a rubber and started to ever so slowly rub a little bit of me away.

2. My room isn't mine any more

It was Saturday.

Saturday was The Day. I was moving out and Gran was moving in.

I liked Gran. We didn't see her much because she lived so far away, but when we did see her, she and I got on. We found the same random things funny, and we liked making cakes. We liked eating them too and I always got to lick the bowl out. If it hadn't been for giving her my room, I would have been more excited about seeing her.

Dad had to wake up Lou. He and I were ready. He was extra chatty, I wasn't. I'd got up early and carefully arranged the things I was going to put away into one pile and the things I was keeping in the other pile. There wasn't room for all my stuff in Lou's room, so I had to pack some things away. It wasn't fair. It was like I was being cleared away to make room for Gran. No one would have dared to clear Lou away.

If I didn't have all my stuff, and I didn't have my room anymore, it was like it wasn't my home, and that was like I didn't really belong in my own family. Actually, it's like when you roll out the pastry to make a pie, there's always a bit left over that you don't know what to do with.

It was too hard to explain to Dad that I felt like a bit of leftover pastry. He wouldn't get it, so I kept moving

things from one pile to the other, trying to decide what to pack away and what to keep. The cuddlies were the hardest. Should I take all of them, or should I just take a few? I decided to just take the ones that still lived on my bed: Rabbit, Owly and Ted and also Pinky and Floppy. I felt bad about the rest. I couldn't look at them, so I covered them over with some old dressing up clothes before I changed my mind.

Dad came in with some boxes, but before he did any packing he came over and we had a really long, squeezy hug. I didn't want it to end. I wanted him to stay and say he was sorry, and it was all a silly mistake, but he didn't. Instead, we packed my things away together; we had a snack just like proper removal men and then we were ready to tackle The Room, but Lou hadn't come out of it yet. Dad went up to sort her out. I stayed in the kitchen and looked out of the window, but I wasn't in the mood for waving at the postman today.

I heard Dad knock on her door and then open it and shut it behind him. Normally I might have crept up the stairs to listen in, but not today. It took Dad a while. She only shouted twice though, so whatever Dad was saying to her must have worked. Then I heard her stamp down the stairs. She stormed into the kitchen and glared at me. I ignored her and edged past her to go upstairs, but she just couldn't resist having a go at me.

'Don't you DARE touch any of my stuff!'

I didn't want her stupid stuff, but if she was going to be mean about it then I might just feel like moving some of it. I ignored her again because she hated that.

'Did you HEAR ME, you stupid cow?'

She yelled the first bit like I was deaf, but she said the second bit really quietly so Dad wouldn't hear. I smiled like I didn't care what she said, and I didn't answer her. Stupid cow herself.

'LOU! Stop that now!'

Dad was at the top of the stairs leaning over the banisters looking hot and grumpy. I think he'd been moving furniture.

'I don't want any more of that kind of talk. Lou, stay out of the way and Katie come up here and help, will you?'

That was unfair. I hadn't done anything. He should just be shouting at Lou. I opened my mouth to tell him that but shut it again when I saw his eyes. They were the big scary popping out eyes that he got when he was really cross. I reached the top landing. He was sweating so I didn't get too close. I didn't want him to know that I'd noticed the little raindrops of sweat running down the side of his face, in case he got embarrassed.

'Right, I've made some space so all you need to do is get your stuff up here while I bring the little bookcase up.'

'Okay, Dad.'

I peered past him into her room and saw that he had put the pullout sleepover bed on the other side of the room to Lou's bed. Good, I didn't want to be near her. Gran was having my bed. Lou had said that Gran might wet the bed, but I didn't believe her.

While I was arranging my books and art stuff on the shelves of my new bookcase, Lou came in. Dad was downstairs having a cup of tea before he started