

A TREASURE WITHIN

24-DE02-W11

An engaged couple discovers the true value of life while searching with their impoverished grandmother for a lost treasure in her attic.

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

At the outskirts of city limits along a suburban side street, sits a white and gray 1940's two story house with a wrap around porch hidden behind overgrown bushes.

A lone rocking chair sits by the screened front door. Weeds sprout out of the cracks in the walkup, sidewalk, and along the crumbling driveway.

SYLVIE, 30's, wearing a bandana over her hair, exits the house carrying a large cardboard box labeled "Bedroom." She sets down the box and sits on the front steps to take in the fresh air.

Her fiancé, KYLE, 30's, dressed in khaki pants and an "Marines" tank top, exits the house carrying two glasses of lemonade. He hands a glass to Sylvie.

SYLVIE

(taking the glass)

Thanks, Babe. That's the last box from the back bedroom. She wants it in the storage pod, but--

KYLE

Some things just aren't worth keeping?

Sylvie shrugs.

SYLVIE

To her they are.

KYLE

Grams can't keep everything and she knows it. She's being stubborn.

He takes a quick swig of his lemonade.

SYLVIE

She's scared, Kyle. Can you blame her? She's lived in this house her whole life.

KYLE

Yeah. This place used to be a show-stopper back in the day, but she couldn't keep it up by herself after Grandpa Frank passed.

SYLVIE

I can only imagine...

She points to the dead flowerbed next to her.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)

Pink and yellow tulips along here
would be stunning if we could
restore this place.

Kyle sighs. He sets his drink down and angles toward her.

KYLE

Sylvie, it's just not in the cards.
So, if you find something that you
think she won't miss, just pitch it
in the waste container, okay?

Sylvie winces.

SYLVIE

I can't do that. She's checked
everything in each box. Twice.
She'll know when something is
missing, and I'll have to deal with
the consequences.

Kyle takes her hand closest to him.

KYLE

I know it won't be easy without
me...

SYLVIE

After three tours, I know the
drill.

KYLE

You know I don't mean my tour.

SYLVIE

We both decided moving the wedding
up wasn't a good option. I'm okay
with her moving in with me. The
question is, is she going to be
okay moving in with me without you?

KYLE

Grams doesn't have a choice. The
house has to be cleared out before
I leave--

SYLVIE

And we still have the entire attic
to pack.

She stands and wipes her palms on her jeans.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)

Didn't your family ever hear of
spring cleaning?

GRAMS (O.S.)

(from inside the house)
Kyle, I need another big box.

Kyle drops his head in his hands and groans.

KYLE

(calling back)
Comin, Grams.

Sylvie leans over and cups his head as she kisses his close
shaved forehead.

He smiles up at her.

KYLE (CONT'D)

You're the best, you know that?

Sylvie pulls him up with both hands.

SYLVIE

Come on, Marine. Up and at 'em.

She grabs hold of the back of Kyle's loose shirt as he
trudges up the steps and playfully follows him inside.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MIDDAY

GRAMS, late 80s, with neatly coiffed curls of white-hair,
wears a button down cardigan as Kyle dabs his head with a
handkerchief and Sylvie fans herself with her dinner napkin.

They are seated on either side of the kitchen table as Grams
places a bowl of potato salad center stage and sits down. She
opens her hands wide, extends one to each of them, and bows
her head.

Kyle shoots a glance at Sylvie, then they both take a hand
and bow their heads.

GRAMS

For what we are about to receive,
may the Lord make us truly
thankful. Amen.

KYLE AND SYLVIE

Amen.

Kyle picks up his fork, ready to dive in.

KYLE

This looks great, Grams.

SYLVIE

It sure does. When did you have
time to whip all this up?

GRAMS

I always have time to take care of
my grandson.

She leans over, squeezes Kyle's hand, then pinches him.

GRAMS (CONT'D)

Gotta put meat on these bones. I
could snap you like a twig.

Kyle pretends to be in pain.

KYLE

Ouch, Grandma! Come on now.

He winks at her and plunges his fork into his potato salad.

Sylvie takes in a mouthful of stringy mac-n-cheese.

Grams steeple her hands in front of her mouth and studies
them as they eat.

GRAMS

Speaking of bones, if these walls
could talk...My oh my...

Kyle wipes his mouth with his napkin.

KYLE

Yeah. There's been a lot of great
memories here, Grams.

GRAMS

Not just great memories. There have
also been trials. Heartaches.
Losses...

Kyle and Sylvie lock eyes.

He clears his throat and shifts in his chair.

KYLE

Grams, there's something we need to tell you--

GRAMS

There's a hidden treasure in this house.

KYLE

Wait. What?

Grams stands, retrieves a box on the shelf, and pulls out a faded Airmail envelope.

GRAMS

I found this while cleaning out the back closet. It's from my Papa while he was stationed in France during the war.

She opens the envelope, removes a few sheets of thin writing paper, and hands them to Kyle.

Kyle wipes his hands on his napkin and gently receives them.

GRAMS (CONT'D)

There.

(she points)

Read the second paragraph.

She sits again as...

Kyle skims the words until his eyes widen. He sits up as he reads it aloud.

KYLE

Look for the treasure I've hidden within Ros--

He squints.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Ros-something. But Ros what? It's washed out by a...What is this, a stain? A smudge?

He looks at Grams.

GRAMS

It's a watermark. From my mother's
tears, I suspect.

Sylvie leans forward, looking concerned.

GRAMS (CONT'D)

(to Sylvie)

My father died in the war, you
see...

Sylvie gasps.

GRAMS (CONT'D)

(to Kyle)

And the postmark on that letter
means she received it a few weeks
after his death.

Sylvie clutches Grams's hand as she looks to Kyle.

SYLVIE

How awful...for all of you. I had
no idea.

Grams pats Sylvie's hand.

GRAMS

(to Kyle)

Keep reading, baby...

Kyle swallows hard.

KYLE

Take it to my friend Turner at
Russel's Jewelers. He'll give you a
fair price. Use half the earnings
to pay the bills and put the other
half in the old coffee tin for safe
keeping till I can invest it upon
my return--

A beat, as Kyle locks eyes with Grams.

KYLE (CONT'D)

But Grandpa Joe never came back...

GRAMS

And there was never any cash in the
coffee tin. I know.

KYLE

(with growing intrigue)

Then what happened to the treasure?

GRAMS

Well, had my mother ever found it,
she would have shared it with
Thomas, Louie, and me.

Sylvie crosses her arms in a self soothing motion.

SYLVIE

Maybe she did, and it was too
painful for her to keep.

Grams shakes her head.

GRAMS

I feel sure she would have honored
my father's request and use it as
he instructed.

(a beat)

No. I think it was her debilitating
depression. In those days, they
didn't understand the condition
like they do now.

Kyle grips the table with both hands.

KYLE

Do you have an idea where the
treasure might be?

Grams takes a sip of her coffee.

Kyle studies her a moment, then his mouth drops open.

KYLE (CONT'D)

(with wild excitement)

You do. Your eyes are sparkling.

GRAMS

If it is here, it's in the attic.
That's where we stored all daddy's
trunks with his personal things,
uniforms, and some toys he'd bought
for us kids.

Kyle jumps up and squares his shoulders as if ready to
conquer the world.

KYLE

(in a bad pirate accent)

Come on, me hearties! Tonight we
hunt for buried treasure.

Sylvie's eyes light up and she jumps up in excited
anticipation.

They both look to Grams.

Grams slowly rises.

GRAMS

Into the depths we go.

(she pauses)

Oh, wait. You had something you wanted to tell me.

KYLE

It can wait.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Kyle and Sylvie look battle worn. Around them are several open black trunks labeled "BARRETT".

Grams sits on a chair near the attic stairs with a few trinkets piled in a box next to her labeled "Keep".

Kyle throws up his hands and groans.

KYLE

We've been searching for hours.
There's nothing here that points to
a ross, or rose, or whatever.

SYLVIE

Why don't we take a break for an
early dinner? Then we can have
another look again.

KYLE

In the dark?
(he frowns)
We're out of time, Syl. You know
it's now or never.

Grams shuts the book she's been examining with a THUD.

GRAMS

What do you mean its now or never?
I have plenty of flashlights.
(she stands)
I'll go down and--

KYLE

Grams, wait. You don't understand.

He shares a look with Sylvie.

SYLVIE

Tell her.

Grams purses her lips.

KYLE

I got a call from the bank this morning. They're taking possession of the house in three days.

With a soft yelp, Gram sits down hard in the chair.

Kyle rushes to her.

KYLE (CONT'D)

We all tried to come up with the money - Mom and Dad, Thomas, even Sylvie. I'm sorry Grams, it just wasn't enough to save the house.

Kyle kneels in front of her and puts his hands on her knees.

GRAMS

So soon? Why didn't you tell me?

KYLE

When this treasure thing sprang up I thought it was an answer to all our prayers.

Grams puts her hand on Kyle's shoulder.

GRAMS

Baby, even if we'd found it, no amount of money could bring me the joy and security I've had in being with my family...

(she touches his cheek)

In being with you...

She looks for and reaches out to Sylvie, who joins them.

GRAMS (CONT'D)

And your lovely bride-to-be.

KYLE

Then you'll be okay living with Sylvie until I get back?

GRAMS

If my father taught me anything, it was to be brave, love God, and take care of our family - like you are now. I could not ask for more.

SYLVIE
We love you, Grams.

As Kyle and Sylvie lean in together to hug her...

GRAMS
Oh my dears, you are the treasure
of my heart.

Sylvie dabs tears from her eyes.

KYLE
Well, I think that deserves some
food, don't you?

Grams smiles up at her.

GRAMS
Sure do!

Kyle stands and squeezes Sylvie's hand as they head for the stairs.

Kyle pauses before following after Sylvie.

KYLE
You'll make lots of great memories
with Syl and I at the new place
too, Grams. You'll see.

Grams watches after him. Once alone, she takes in a deep breath and stands.

She walks over to one of her father's closed trunks and opens it. Inside are the three toys he sent long ago. She examines them as she lifts them out one by one...

A rocking horse with Thomas's name carved on its underside.

A spin top with Louie's name painted in red.

And a curly, red-haired porcelain doll dressed in a flowing white dress with folds of petticoats underneath.

GRAMS
Oh, Papa, I'm sorry I could never
bring myself to play with her. It
was just too hard without you.

The FLOORBOARDS SQUEAK behind her. She turns to see Sylvie.

SYLVIE
You sure you're okay?

Grams nods and inconspicuously wipes a tear from her cheek.

GRAMS

Just takin a moment to say goodbye.

Sylvie scans the attic.

SYLVIE

I'm sorry you can't take it all
with you.

GRAMS

Neither could Papa, my Frank, Mama,
or Louie. But I imagine what is
stored up in heaven for us when we
get there will far outweigh it all.

Sylvie kneels beside Grams. She lifts the dangling tag
attached to one of the doll's arms.

It reads: "For Beth"

SYLVIE

She's one beautiful doll. Do you
want to take her with us?

GRAMS

I think somewhere a little girl is
waiting to love her.

SYLVIE

That's a lovely sentiment.

Sylvie blinks hard. She leans forward, grabs the tag again.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)

Grams, look!

The other side of the tag reads: "La Poupée Rosamund"

SYLVIE (CONT'D)

She's called Rosamund...

A beat, then Grams catches on and cries out...

GRAMS

The treasure is within Ros-amund.

She feverishly runs her hands up and down the doll.

Sylvie joins her in examining the buttons and seams.

Then, Grams lifts the dress and feels along the petticoat.
She pauses and smiles at Sylvie.

They both look to see an unusual line of thread sewn on one of the seams.

Grams tugs at the thread. A hidden pocket opens.

Sunlight from the window causes the two square-cut, two-carat diamonds to glisten in Grams's hand.

SYLVIE

Oh, Grams...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - THREE MONTHS LATER

Sylvie picks up a large box labeled "Bedroom" from the porch.

As she turns to go into the house with the box, she passes Grams lounging in her rocking chair.

Next to Grams are two empty rocking chairs. She smiles as she cools herself with a fan.

The house and porch are freshly painted. It's once again a show-stopper. Gone are the weeds and overgrown bushes, replaced with rows of colorful tulips and leafy green trees.

Kyle, dressed in civilian clothes, exits the house carrying two glasses of lemonade. He hands a glass to Grams and sits in the empty rocking chair next to her.

Sylvie rejoins them, glass in hand, and sits next to Kyle.

Sporting their wedding bands, the newlyweds clink glasses, then Kyle clinks with Grams.

They share smiles and happily take long sips together.

FADE OUT.

