

The Story of Grammy Rose



By Christy Monson
(Based on a true story)

“Seek out our loved ones, preserving their names and their memory” (Children’s Songbook, 90).

Tamika curled up under the soft blanket and took a deep breath. The quilt smelled sweet, like the cherry lotion her grandma used. She loved that smell.

“Gram, I’m glad Mama and I came,” Tamika said.

Gram sat on the bed next to Tamika and stroked her hair. “I’m glad too. Do you want a bedtime story?”

Tamika nodded. “Tell me about when Grammy Rose escaped.” Tomorrow they were visiting a place where her great-grandma Rose might have stayed, and she wanted to hear the story again.

Tamika knew exactly which bedtime story she wanted to hear.

“Again?” Gram laughed. “All right. That’s one of my favorites too.” She leaned back and got comfortable.

“Your great-grandma Rose lived on a big farm called a plantation with her mama and daddy. They were slaves, and they wanted to be free,” Gram said. “One day, Rose’s mama died of a fever. Her daddy

decided it was time to escape with Rose.”

Gram’s fingers traced lines along the quilt as she talked, like she was tracing a map of the journey.

“They left at night and followed the North Star. It’s part of a constellation called the Big Dipper,” Gram said. “Back then, slaves called it the Drinking Gourd.”

“What’s a gourd?” Tamika asked.

“It’s like a squash. Slaves would use hollowed-out gourds as spoons to scoop water from buckets to drink,” Gram said. “Rose and her daddy followed the Drinking Gourd north. People from the Underground Railroad helped them along the way.”

Tamika nodded. She knew that the Underground Railroad wasn’t really a railroad. It was a name for the people who helped slaves escape to safety. Tomorrow Tamika and her mom were going to a house called Slave Haven, where some of the slaves hid on their journey north.

“But we don’t know for sure if Grammy Rose stayed in Slave Haven,” Tamika said.

Gram looked thoughtful. “That’s right. Rose couldn’t write, so we don’t know the exact places she stayed,” Gram said. “But when I was a girl, Rose told me her story, and I wrote it in my journal.”

Tamika sat up. “Can I read what you wrote?”

Gram nodded. “We can look at it tomorrow—”

Just then, Mama came in to kiss Tamika goodnight.

“Are you two still talking about Grammy Rose?” Mama said. “Tomorrow you can explore secret passages and trap doors at Slave Haven. But right now, it’s time for bed.”

As Mama tucked the blankets around Tamika, Gram told her one more thing about Rose.

“Grammy Rose always said that miracles from God brought her safely north. That taught me to look for miracles every day,” Gram said. “Like warm sunshine.”

“Mmm-hmm,” Mama said, looking at Gram. “Or a beautiful smile.” She turned to Tamika. “Or the miracle of Tamika finally falling asleep!”

Tamika laughed. She had never thought about sunshine and smiles as miracles, but the world would be pretty dark and sad without them!

Tamika felt happy and warm thinking about how brave her great-great-grandma was. Just before Gram shut the door, an idea popped into Tamika’s head.

“Gram? Can I have a journal? I want to look for miracles and write them down too,” Tamika said.

“We’ll get you one tomorrow,” Gram said.

“I know what my miracle is today,” Tamika said.

“What?” asked Gram.

“It’s you,” Tamika said. “And Mama, and us coming to visit, and learning about Grammy Rose . . .” Tamika’s words became softer and softer until she finally fell asleep, curled up beneath the warm, sweet-smelling quilt. ●

The author lives in Utah, USA.



When I was young, we moved. We had no idea we would be living on my great-great-grandpa’s farmland! I learned that he and I shared the same chore: picking rocks out of the garden. He said, “There were so many rocks, it was like the garden grew rocks!” I used to hate picking up rocks, but then I began to love it. It makes me feel close to him because we are so much alike and have the same chores.

Fay K., age 11, Utah, USA

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