



GRANDMA'S STORY

BY JOSH WHITTINGHAM

An audio drama for Leicester Digital Pride

Transcript



Xtra Features

SYNOPSIS

How would you feel if your grandchild came out as gay? Would you accept them and love them no matter what, or would you find it difficult to accept their sexuality as it goes against everything you believe in? This is Grandma's Story. An audio drama produced by Xtra Features for Leicester Digital Pride.

CAST AND CREW

Grandma	Virginia Hall
Written by	Josh Whittingham
Produced by	Jerome Whittingham
Music	"English Country Garden" by Aaron Kenney
Additional sounds	Zapslat.com

An Xtra Features Production for Leicester Digital Pride

SCENE 1: EXT. GRANDMA'S GARDEN - DAY

FX: Birds tweeting, distant lawnmower, distant church bells ringing

GRANDMA:

Family is so important, isn't it? I'm lucky enough to be surrounded by a large, loving family. I have three children, six grandchildren, and various nieces, nephews and godchildren. I'm proud of them all in their own ways. Every single last one of them. Especially Luke...

I used to think tradition was important too at one time. My parents, God bless them, were very traditional, conservative people. My husband too, God rest his soul. So I suppose that same stubborn obsession with tradition was instilled in me too. I couldn't escape it. It was infectious.

I was brought up going to Church. My parents would take me every Sunday. The messages of the Bible used to suffocate me like hands around my throat. One line always stuck with me from an early age. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Leviticus, Chapter 18 verse 22. I remember it still.

FX: distant church bells ringing

GRANDMA (CONT'D):

I used to believe it, like the fool that I am. And it nearly cost me my family. (pause) Nothing is more important than family. I realise that now.

Luke is my grandson: the son of my youngest daughter, Rose. He's always been such a bright young lad. He loves music, art, literature. He's always been such a creative boy. He's got a natural artistic flair. He's always made me such a proud grandmother, even though I don't always show it.

GRANDMA (CONT'D): He was never like the other boys in his class at school. They all liked to play football or pretend to be superheroes or action men and roll around in the mud. But not Luke. He liked to play with my old doll's house, the one I had when I was his age, many many years ago. One time, when he was five, I caught him trying on a pair of my old high heels.

Luke was different. His parents knew it. I knew it, deep down. And I think Luke knew it too. He realised he was different from a young age, I think. Children can be quite perceptive, don't you agree? They can be quiet cruel too...

One day, when he was seventeen, Luke came over to see me, as he often did after college. I rustled him up a cup of tea - milk and two sugars - and some freshly made scones and jam. He sat himself down on the armchair opposite me, eating his scones and drinking his tea very quickly. He was nervous and fidgety. He couldn't look me in the eye. He was unusually quiet - he was usually such a bubbly and outgoing young man. We used to talk for hours about the most crazy and ridiculous things!

But something was troubling him that afternoon. He looked at me with a real fear in his eyes. It was festering away inside him. He needed to dispel some sort of demon inside him. He said "You'll always love me, won't you Grandma?". I was shocked. Of course I would.

"What's the matter, Luke?" I asked him. He looked away again.

"There's something I need to tell you, Grandma," he said. I took a big gulp of my tea, clenched my hands together in my lap and took a deep breath. I was ready to listen.

GRANDMA (CONT'D): "I'm gay". The words came tumbling out of his lips like a runaway train about to come crashing off the rails. They were like bullets hurtling towards me. I felt I had to duck away from them to avoid their challenging consequences.

At that moment, all I could think about was my parents telling me over and over and over again that homosexuality was wrong. All I could think about was the belief that I'd blindly allowed to grow stronger and stronger inside me. All I could think was that gay men were predatory: they hated women and couldn't be trusted around children. They carried disease: they were riddled with AIDS. They were flamboyant: they drunk and took drugs and shoved their lifestyle down your throats. They refused to listen to anyone else's opinion. Being gay was an affliction: it was something to be ashamed of.

But things are different now. I'm different now. For a long time I fought an internal battle: a battle against my own inherent homophobia. I struggled against the suffocating prejudices of my parents, my Church and myself. It's difficult when somebody comes along one day and says you've got to adapt to their way of doing things or die. I hadn't realised that the world had moved on and left me behind a long time ago.

Like I said, family is everything, isn't it? It's the most important thing. I've always been blessed to have a loving family around me. Luke deserves that too. Once I'd come to that conclusion, the rest soon fell into place. I'm not saying it was easy, but I did it. I overcame my own prejudices: my own homophobia. And now I couldn't be a prouder grandmother.

Luke and I get along better now than we ever have done. He has a boyfriend now, Sam. Sam is a transgender man.

GRANDMA (CONT'D): He's the most caring young man I've ever met, and he and Luke are perfectly suited. I couldn't be happier for them. Happiness is key. And all I want is for my family to be happy.

Luke and Sam asked me if I wanted to go to Leicester Pride with them last year. I was a bit unsure at first - the beliefs of most of my adult life were still niggling away in the back of my mind - but I said yes. As it got closer and closer to the day, I got more and more excited. Luke and Sam are such proud young men and I wanted to show them just how proud of them I am. They dressed me up in a fabulous sequin jacket that Luke had made for me at university. Sam painted glitter on my face like a fabulous drag queen. I slayed!

As it turns out, going to Leicester Pride was one of the best experiences of my life.

FX: music blaring, crowds cheering and celebrating, whistles blowing

I felt so proud walking through Vicky Park with Luke and Sam, who were holding hands defiantly. I'd never seen so many rainbow flags, or as many happy, proud, beautiful people. It was a magical place. There were people from all walks of life. All genders, all races, all sexualities, all classes, all joined together in one big great celebration. They were family. My queer family.

Something happened at Pride that I'll never forget. This young girl came up to me: she must have been about fifteen. She said how wonderful it was that I was accepting of my grandson and that I was marching with him and his boyfriend at Pride. She told me he was lucky to have a grandmother like me. I wasn't so sure, but she told me that she wasn't so lucky. Her family were ashamed of her: they weren't loving or accepting. They'd thrown her out. All she wanted was a hug from her mother and for her to say that she loved her no matter what.

GRANDMA (CONT'D): And so I gave that poor young girl the biggest hug and told her "I accept you, and I love you regardless. You're part of my family now".

Family is so important, isn't it? I'm lucky enough to be surrounded by a large, loving family. My queer family.

THE END