

## Grandpa's Face

In the summer, Grandpa was an actor, and some Saturday afternoons he and his friend, Ms. Gladys, would take Tamika to the theater to watch him act on the stage, if Mama and Daddy said the play wasn't too grown-up.

The theater was Tamika's favorite place to go. Make-believe things happened there. She would sit in the front row and watch Grandpa turn into another person, changing his face and the way he walked and talked and sang. And even when he turned into somebody else's grandpa, Tamika didn't mind. It looked true and it felt true, but she knew it was just a play, and when it was over and all the actors came out to bow, and bow, and wave, she would clap so hard her hands hurt.

One day, Tamika went to Grandpa's room to ask for a story. She stopped at the door because Grandpa was rehearsing. He had his book in his hand and he was reading his lines aloud. Then he stopped reading and looked into the mirror, slowly changing his face into a face that Tamika had never seen before. It was a hard face. It had a tight mouth and cold, cold eyes. It was a face that could never love her or anyone.

Tamika stood watching, as Grandpa changed his face back and read some more lines from his book. Then she went to her room and sat on the bed. Her stomach was filled with scared places that made her cry. She had not known that Grandpa could look like that, and now that she did know she couldn't be sure he might not someday look at her with that face that could not love.

She got her jigsaw puzzle and played with it quietly until Mama and Daddy had finished cooking dinner.