

Years 7 & 8
3rd Place: Sami Mulder
Year 7, John Calvin Christian College

Tristan

Tristan Breathnach sat in the giant armchair by the window, peering foggily at the park. It was 15 years since Tristan's wife had died, and yet it still had a drastic effect on his life. Gone was the chirpy 61-year-old. Tristan now spent his days watching the park from the comfort of his armchair. He cares no longer what others may think of him, only what he thinks of others. Tristan had built a fiercely guarded wall around his heart at his wife's death. Sure, his grandchildren visited him, but he remained distant even from them. Usually, Tristan would watch Cara Dayle, the gardener. Once, his wife had been the gardener. But that was before. This was after.

Cara Dayle looked up from her gardening to see Mr. Breathnach staring at her. This was not unusual. (Mr. Breathnach sat there every day watching her.) As usual, she gave a friendly wave only to receive a frown in return.

"One day I will go up there and talk to him," she thought. "Maybe even today!" She returned to the flowers she was dutifully watering. As she tenderly watered, she imagined she was pouring her love into the plants. Everyone in the town knew and loved Cara for the love, time and care she poured into everybody. And yet, she hadn't found 'The One'. As Cara emptied the watering can onto the last flower, she smiled. As a child, she had always imagined getting married and having millions of little kids. Now here she was, 70 years old, loved by everyone, yet with none to truly love. Because that had been then. This was now.

Tristan eased himself out of the armchair and shuffled over to the door at the sound of a knock. As Tristan pulled the door open, he frowned at the sight of Cara standing in the doorway. He didn't like it when others tried to intrude in his life. First it had been his children, siblings and grandchildren. Then the retirement village. He had pushed all of them away. But now Cara! This was too much. He went to shut the door, but Cara pushed it back over. She strayed into the house holding what was presumably lunch.

"When did you last have a homemade meal?" she asked Tristan.

She looked over at him and, reading his expression, nodded.

"Just as I thought. Not in a while. I made an Irish meal, as I am of Irish descent."

She busied herself setting the table for two. She beckoned for Tristan to come and sit. For the first half of lunch, Tristan sat in stony silence, pretending to ignore her friendly chatter. But eventually, she began to ask about him, and he slowly opened up and began to tell his story.

"I'm finally making progress!" Cara thought. It was a month after her first visit with Tristan, and they had had many more lunches together. She was beginning to break through his fiercely guarded heart. How funny that in Irish, Tristan meant something upon the lines of sad. He truly was sad. He had such an eventful life, somehow managing to remain hopeful through it all. But then his wife died. All hope had disappeared. She liked to think she was bringing hope back into his life. But who knew?

Tristan smiled grimly. It had been a year since Cara's first visit, and now here he was, lying in hospital struggling to fight cancer.

"How strange," he thought, "that Cara's name means a friend in Irish. She truly has been a friend to me."

Those were the last thoughts Tristan would ever think. He died with a smile upon his face.