

# The Crown Jewels

by Ted Boretti

Sue helped her Grandma Pearl up the stairs to the museum doors. People waited in a long line. Sue and her grandma skipped right to the front. A staff member opened the door for them.

“Thank you,” Sue said.



“It’s nice to see you again, ma’am,” said the staff person to Grandma Pearl. Grandma Pearl flashed her membership card. She and her granddaughter breezed through the security gate and into the exhibit hall.

“I’ve been a member a long time,” Grandma Pearl said to Sue.

A trip to the museum was Sue's idea. The Crown Jewels were on display. The collection was on loan from the Tower of London. Sue studied history at college. Her Grandma Pearl had lived half her life in England. The historical jewels were of great interest to them both.

A great crowd huddled around the first display. Sue and her Grandma Pearl inched forward. The first display showed the crown of Queen Elizabeth. Its platinum frame arched over a plush purple velvet cap. It sparkled with white diamonds. The biggest looked like the size of a hen's egg.

Sue read the placard. She said, "It has over 2,800 diamonds, Grandma."

Pearl did not have to read the placard. She said, "That large diamond is the Koh-i-Noor. Some say that it's cursed. Men cannot wear

it. The legend states that ‘only God or a woman can wear it with impunity.’ That’s why it’s on the queen’s crown, you know, and not on the crown of King George VI. The Queen Mother wore it as just a circlet at the coronation of her daughter in 1953.”

Grandma Pearl turned away from the crown. She tugged Sue’s arm.

“Look here,” Grandma Pearl said.

The two looked upon a large but otherwise ordinary stone. It was the size of an overstuffed pillow. Two metal rings, like handles, stuck from the top.

“It’s the Stone of Scone,” whispered Grandma Pearl. “The Coronation Stone. It fit under the seat of the throne. All the old kings were crowned on top of it. As a child, we would play king and queen and sit on

any old rocks. Those were our coronation stones.”

Next the two gazed upon a royal scepter. The long gold baton had rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, but on the top was a massive diamond.

“The Cullinan,” said Grandma Pearl. “The Star of Africa. This giant diamond is actually one of nine diamonds cut from the same massive stone.”

In the same display as the scepter was a globe. This small orb was banded with pearls and gems. Sue read the information placard. At the end of a coronation, the king or queen held the “Sovereign’s Orb” in the left hand and the “Sovereign’s Scepter” in the right.

Grandma Pearl laughed out loud.

“What is it, Grandma?” Sue asked.

Grandma Pearl wet her lips. Sue knew her grandma was about to begin a story. “Your grandfather and I did not have much money,” she said. “He once surprised me with a gift. A tiny ceramic cow. A shorthorn. We lived in a city flat. The notion of owning a milk cow was ridiculous. But he called me his little milkmaid. I often wore my hair in a milkmaid’s braid, you see. Anyway, we joked that the cow was part of our crown jewels. Our collection of crown jewels grew. He won me a jar of seashells by guessing how many were inside. I bought him a set of copper buttons for his blazer to replace the worn leather ones. I never did sew them on. When I found work in the typist pool during the war, he gave me a glass lily pad to decorate my typing desk. That was my

Cullinan diamond. How I adored that precious lily pad.”

Sue adored the faraway look in her Grandma Pearl’s eyes.

The exhibit was a small one, but precious. After a sword, another crown, some rings, spoons, and chalices, it was over. Although Grandma Pearl had paid for entry with her membership card, it was she who thanked Sue.

“I had a splendid time, Sue,” she said.

“I’d love to do it again,” Sue replied. For she had discovered that her most precious treasure was the company of her grandmother.

The End