

## *Granddad's Garden Book 2*

### Chapter 1– Air War

Granddad pulled into the last available parking space at Jeremy's elementary school. He eased his daughter's borrowed car into a tight space, then hustled to the auditorium for the student awards ceremony. Parents filled the chairs. Granddad craned his neck to spot one last seat in the front row.

This week of grandson-sitting was all about reconnecting and he had made great strides. Granddad had flown to the Atlanta area to be with Jeremy in his new home while his parents traveled on business. The reward for the long flight was uninterrupted access to Jeremy and his crazy schemes. How could anyone view this as a chore?

Kids filed into the auditorium following their homeroom teachers, then sat on the floor between the stage and parents' chairs. They chatted with each other, waiving their arms with excitement and glancing back at the crowd behind. What energy. Jeremy's third grade homeroom sat to the side. His eyes met Granddad's then he beamed a smile and exchanged waves.

A procession of students marched to the stage to accept their honor roll awards. At last, Jeremy's name was called and he popped up like a jack-in-the-box. He sprinted up the steps and shook the principal's hand, one of the few students on the Principal's List for achievement. Jeremy raised both fists in the air.

After leaving the awards ceremony, Granddad's afternoon dragged. Lily, his daughter's energetic Doberman required a walk, then ball play. The house grew dreary without the little guy around. Eventually, it was time, with Lily on her leash, to walk to the bus stop. The school bus arrived on time and Jeremy hopped out.

"Hi, Granddad," Jeremy gave two big hugs, first to Granddad then to Lily.

"Hey, Big Guy. How was school?"

"Did'ja see my award?" Jeremy asked.

He sorted through crumpled papers in his backpack to retrieve the President's List certificate. The surprisingly unrumpled award showed Jeremy's name in bold script with a gold star next to it.

"Nice," Granddad said. "I'm proud of you. I have it all on video to show your mom and dad when they return."

They walked back to his home in bright afternoon light. Though still January, dozens of birds sang and squirrels scurried among the trees. Perched atop a southern magnolia tree, a smallish hawk peered at other birds below. Granddad identified it to Jeremy as a kestrel, a small but aggressive raptor that fed on mice and other rodents in summer but relied on small birds during winter months.

"That is one brave bird," Granddad said. "He's a real survivor."

"Um, hum." Jeremy did not seem interested to hear about birds. He slumped under the weight of his backpack full of books, a load for a third-grader.

"I can carry your pack if it's too heavy," Granddad said.

"Naw, that's okay," Jeremy replied. "It's just I, uh had some trouble with my friends at