

## Mrs. Anastasia and Me

By: Hailey Epstein

I stood, staring at the red door, silently arguing about whether to ring the doorbell or not. My finger, an inch from the doorbell button, shook. I calmed myself and pushed the button.

Beyond the door, I heard a noise and a second later the door opened. There stood a thin, tall girl. She had brown hair, baby blue eyes, and thin, red lips. She wore a pair of blue jeans, a blue and black checkered button-down shirt, tied at the bottom, with a black undershirt.

"You ready?" my best friend Natasha said.

"Yep," I replied, "Come on."

We got in the car and drove to the mall. We were almost there when a black SUV switched into our lane. The driver drove slowly, so I honked. The driver looked in her rearview mirror, and I saw her chocolate brown eyes. They stared back at me and I saw a little gray hair escape her ponytail. She exited the highway and I sped forward.

"Why'd you honk?" Natasha asked.

"She was going slow," I told her.

"But it's kind of rude to honk," my wise friend reasoned, and that was the end of that conversation.

I parked the car, and we went inside. We headed for our favorite stores and shopped to our heart's desire. We were heading to the food court, when I thought I saw the lady that had driven the car in front of us.

I poked Natasha in the side.

"What?" she asked, a little annoyed.

"I thought I saw the driver from earlier," I told her.

"Maybe you should go apologize for honking at her."

"But--"

"No buts," Natasha said, "Go apologize. OMG I sound like my mom!"

"Fine. And you do sound like your mom."

I headed over to the lady to apologize. When I raised my hand to tap her on the shoulder, I hesitated. *Maybe she doesn't remember me*, I thought, or *maybe she didn't see me in the car*. I lowered my hand to leave when someone bumped into me. I slammed into the lady knocking us both down.

"Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry!" I stammered, my face reddening. I helped her get to her feet, "I didn't mean to knock you down."

"Oh, it's fine," the lady said, "Just a little shocked is all."

"Um, I also wanted to apologize for honking at you earlier. I was being very impatient and it was very rude of me."

"Oh it is quite all right dear. My name is Anastasia. What's your name, dear?"

"I'm Hailey."

By the time we got back to Natasha, I learned that Mrs. Anastasia was a Holocaust survivor. When Natasha saw us coming up to her she waved.

They introduced themselves and shook hands. The three of us headed to the food court. We sat down at a table and started talking again.

After a while, Mrs. Anastasia had to leave.

"I must go but it was very nice to meet you ladies," she said, "Maybe we could get together another time."

"Great idea!" I started to take out some paper and a pen. I wrote down my phone number and handed it to Natasha to do the same. Mrs. Anastasia took the piece of paper and told us her phone number to add in our phones. We waved goodbye and went to shop.

Ring! Ring! My phone buzzed. I looked at the caller id to see it was Mrs. Anastasia. We talked and decided to meet up at the park.

When I got to the park, I found her waiting on a bench feeding some birds. I watched her for a moment then went over to her. She looked up at the sound of my footsteps. I saw her chocolate brown eyes reflecting the shine of the sun. I smiled to myself.

We started walking for a bit, asking each other questions. We stopped talking and silence fell. We stayed that way for a bit until I broke the silence.

"Pardon me if this is too personal, but do you have children Mrs. Anastasia?"

"You are fine, Hailey. I have three wonderful children and six playful grandchildren."

"Where do they live?" I asked worried I was getting too personal.

“One lives here with her two children and husband. Her name is Alexia. My other two children live in California, with their husbands, wives, and children. Their names are Jessica and Stephan. What about you? Do you have any siblings?”

“I have one younger brother named Gabriel and one younger sister named Gillian.”

“What lovely names. How old are they?” she asked.

“Gillian is 8 and Gabe-that’s his nickname-is 7.” I glanced at Mrs. Anastasia. She was staring at the ground.

Suddenly, Mrs. Anastasia stopped. I stopped and turned around to look at her. She started leaning to one side. I quickly went to her side and caught her before she could hit the ground.

“Mrs. Anastasia? Mrs. Anastasia!” I started freaking out. I scrambled for my phone and called 911.

I went with her in the ambulance and followed her as far as I could in the hospital. A nurse had to hold me back and assured me she would be fine, that it was only a stroke. I waited in the waiting room for news.

Finally, a nurse came to let me know she was stable enough for me to come see her.

I rushed into the room and to the bed. Mrs. Anastasia looked up at me. She held up a weak hand for me to take.

“I’m sorry for over exaggerating, but you scared me, Mrs. Anastasia.”

“I know. I know. I scared myself, actually.” She chuckled, “I’m so glad we became good friends. It was so great to get to know you.”

“Don’t talk like that. Please don’t,” I cried. A tear dropped onto her frail hand. Her hand was cold. I watched her breathe hard. And then there was a long beep. Nurses came rushing in, almost trampling me. I was pushed backward and taken out of the room, sobbing. The nurse who had grabbed me tried to reassure me, but it wouldn’t help. My friend was gone.