



# My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry

By Fredrik Backman



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A charming, warmhearted novel from the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *A Man Called Ove*.

Elsa is seven years old and different. Her grandmother is seventy-seven years old and crazy—as in standing-on-the-balcony-firing-paintball-guns-at-strangers crazy. She is also Elsa's best, and only, friend. At night Elsa takes refuge in her grandmother's stories, in the Land-of-Almost-Awake and the Kingdom of Miamas, where everybody is different and nobody needs to be normal.

When Elsa's grandmother dies and leaves behind a series of letters apologizing to people she has wronged, Elsa's greatest adventure begins. Her grandmother's instructions lead her to an apartment building full of drunks, monsters, attack dogs, and old crones but also to the truth about fairy tales and kingdoms and a grandmother like no other.

*My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* is told with the same comic accuracy and beating heart as Fredrik Backman's bestselling debut novel, *A Man Called Ove*. It is a story about life and death and one of the most important human rights: the right to be different.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Bring tissues when you start *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, but bring your funnybone, too. It's that kind of book – one that, if you miss it, you'll never forgive yourself."

(*Business Insider, Best Books of 2015*)

"Fredrik Backman has a knack for weaving tales that are believable and fanciful. Backman's smooth storytelling infuses his characters with charm and wit... a delightful story." (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)

"Every bit as churlish but lovable as Backman's cantankerous protagonist in his debut, *A Man Called Ove* (2014), precocious Elsa will easily work her way into the hearts of readers who like characters with spunk to spare. A delectable homage to the power of stories to comfort and heal, Backman's tender tale of the touching relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter is a tribute to the everlasting bonds of deep family ties." (*Booklist (starred)*)

"Full of heart, hope, forgiveness, and the embracing of differences, Elsa's story is one that sticks with you long after you've turned the last page." (*Library Journal*)

"Firmly in league with Roald Dahl and Neil Gaiman. A touching, sometimes funny, often wise portrait of grief."

(*Kirkus Reviews*)

"In his second offering, Backman (*A Man Called Ove*) continues to write with the same whimsical charm and warm heart as in his debut." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"What I admire in Backman's stories is his honesty and perspective about grief and losing those we love the most. I would recommend this book to Neil Gaiman fans, as the storytelling is fantastic and heartwarming." (*Sun-Gazette*)

"I can't remember the last time that I read a book where I alternately cried and laughed, and sometimes both at the same time." (Marilyn Dahl, Shelf Awareness)

#### Praise for A MAN CALLED OVE:

"A charming debut... You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll feel new sympathy for the curmudgeons in your life. You'll also want to move to Scandinavia, where everything's cuter." (*People*)

"An inspiring affirmation of love for life and acceptance of people for their essence and individual quirks. *A Man Called Ove* is a perfect selection for book clubs. It's well written and replete with universal concerns. It lacks violence and profanity, is life-affirming and relationship-driven. The book is bittersweet, tender, often wickedly humorous and almost certain to elicit tears. I contentedly wept my way through a box of tissues when I first read the novel and again when I savored it for a second time." (*BookBrowse.com*)

"*A Man Called Ove* is exquisite. The lyrical language is the confetti thrown liberally throughout this

celebration-of-life story, adding sparkle and color to an already spectacular party. Backman's characters feel so authentic that readers will likely find analogues living in their own neighborhoods." (*Shelf Awareness* (starred review))

"Readers seeking feel-good tales with a message will rave about the rantings of this solitary old man with a singular outlook. If there was an award for 'Most Charming Book of the Year,' this first novel by a Swedish blogger-turned-overnight-sensation would win hands down." (*Booklist, Starred Review*)

"A funny crowd-pleaser that serves up laughs to accompany a thoughtful reflection on loss and love... The author writes with winning charm." (*Publishers Weekly, starred review*)

"This charming debut novel by Backman should find a ready audience with English-language readers... hysterically funny... wry descriptions, excellent pacing... In the contest of Most Winning Combination, it would be hard to beat grumpy Ove and his hidden, generous heart." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

"There are characters who amuse us, and stories that touch us. But this character and his story do even more: A Man Called Ove makes us think about who we are and how we want to live our lives. A Man Called Ove seems deceptively simple at the start, yet Frederik Backman packs a lifetime's worth of hilarity and heartbreak into this novel. Even the most crusty curmudgeon will love Ove!" (Lois Leveen, author of *Juliet's Nurse* and *The Secrets of Mary Bowser*)

"One of the most moving novels I have read this year. I defy anyone to read this book and look at a quiet withdrawn person the same way ever again." (*Cayacosta Reviews*)

#### About the Author

Fredrik Backman is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Man Called Ove*, *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, *Britt-Marie Was Here*, *Beartown*, as well as a novella, *And Every Morning the Way Home Gets Longer and Longer*. His books are published in more than thirty-five countries. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden, with his wife and two children. His new novel, *Beartown*, will be published in April 2017.

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My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry

## 1



## TOBACCO

Every seven-year-old deserves a superhero. That's just how it is.

Anyone who doesn't agree needs their head examined.

That's what Elsa's granny says, at least.

Elsa is seven, going on eight. She knows she isn't especially good at being seven. She knows she's different.

Her headmaster says she needs to “fall into line” in order to achieve “a better fit with her peers.” Other adults describe her as “very grown-up for her age.” Elsa knows this is just another way of saying “massively annoying for her age,” because they only tend to say this when she corrects them for mispronouncing “déjà vu” or not being able to tell the difference between “me” and “I” at the end of a sentence. Smart-asses usually can’t, hence the “grown-up for her age” comment, generally said with a strained smile at her parents. As if she has a mental impairment, as if Elsa has shown them up by not being totally thick just because she’s seven. And that’s why she doesn’t have any friends except Granny. Because all the other seven-year-olds in her school are as idiotic as seven-year-olds tend to be, but Elsa is different.

She shouldn’t take any notice of what those muppets think, says Granny. Because all the best people are different—look at superheroes. After all, if superpowers were normal, everyone would have them.

Granny is seventy-seven years old, going on seventy-eight. She’s not very good at it either. You can tell she’s old because her face looks like newspaper stuffed into wet shoes, but no one ever accuses Granny of being grown-up for her age. “Perky,” people sometimes say to Elsa’s mum, looking either fairly worried or fairly angry as Mum sighs and asks how much she owes for the damages. Or when Granny’s smoking at the hospital sets the fire alarm off and she starts ranting and raving about how “everything has to be so bloody politically correct these days!” when the security guards make her extinguish her cigarette. Or that time she made a snowman in Britt-Marie and Kent’s garden right under their balcony and dressed it up in grown-up clothes so it looked as if a person had fallen from the roof. Or that time those prim men wearing spectacles started ringing all the doorbells and wanted to talk about God and Jesus and heaven, and Granny stood on her balcony with her dressing gown flapping open, shooting at them with her paintball gun, and Britt-Marie couldn’t quite decide if she was most annoyed about the paintball-gun thing or the not-wearing-anything-under-the-dressing-gown thing, but she reported both to the police just to be on the safe side.

Those are the times, Elsa supposes, that people find Granny perky for her age.

They also say that Granny is mad, but in actual fact she’s a genius. It’s just that she’s a bit of a crackpot at the same time. She used to be a doctor, and she won prizes and journalists wrote articles about her and she went to all the most terrible places in the world when everyone else was getting out. She saved lives and fought evil everywhere on earth. As superheroes do.

But one day someone decided she was too old to save lives, even if Elsa quite strongly suspects what they really meant by “too old” was “too crazy.” Granny refers to this person as “Society” and says it’s only because everything has to be so bloody politically correct nowadays that she’s no longer allowed to make incisions in people. And that it was really mainly about Society getting so bleeding fussy about the smoking ban in the operating theaters, and who could work under those sorts of conditions?

So now she’s mainly at home driving Britt-Marie and Mum around the bend. Britt-Marie is Granny’s neighbor, Mum is Elsa’s mum. And really Britt-Marie is also Elsa’s mum’s neighbor because Elsa’s mum lives next door to Elsa’s granny. And Elsa obviously also lives next door to Granny, because Elsa lives with her mum. Except every other weekend, when she lives with Dad and Lisette. And of course George is also Granny’s neighbor, because he lives with Mum. It’s a bit all over the place.

But anyway, to get back to the point: lifesaving and driving people nuts are Granny’s superpowers. Which perhaps makes her a bit of a dysfunctional superhero. Elsa knows this because she looked up “dysfunctional” on Wikipedia. People of Granny’s age describe Wikipedia as “an encyclopedia, but on the net!” Encyclopedias are what Elsa describes as “Wikipedia, but analog.” Elsa has checked “dysfunctional” in both places and it means that something is not quite functioning as it’s supposed to. Which is one of Elsa’s

favorite things about her granny.

But maybe not today. Because it's half past one in the morning and Elsa is fairly tired and would really like to go back to bed. Except that's not going to happen, because Granny's been throwing turds at a policeman.

It's a little complicated.



Elsa looks around the little rectangular room and yawns listlessly and so widely that she looks like she's trying to swallow her own head.

"I did tell you not to climb the fence," she mutters, checking her watch.

Granny doesn't answer. Elsa takes off her Gryffindor scarf and puts it in her lap. She was born on Boxing Day seven years ago (almost eight). The same day some German scientists recorded the strongest-ever emission of gamma radiation from a magnetar over the earth. Admittedly Elsa doesn't know what a magnetar is, but it's some kind of neutron star. And it sounds a little like "Megatron," which is the name of the evil one in Transformers, which is what simpletons who don't read enough quality literature call "a children's program." In actual fact the Transformers are robots, but if you look at it academically they could also be counted as superheroes. Elsa is very keen on both Transformers and neutron stars, and she imagines that an "emission of gamma radiation" would look a bit like that time Granny spilled Fanta on Elsa's iPhone and tried to dry it out in the toaster. And Granny says it makes Elsa special to have been born on a day like that. And being special is the best way of being different.

Granny is busy distributing small heaps of tobacco all over the wooden table in front of her and rolling them into rustling cigarette papers.

"I said I told you not to climb the fence!"

Granny makes a snorting sound and searches the pockets of her much-too-large overcoat for a lighter. She doesn't seem to be taking any of this very seriously, mainly because she never seems to take anything seriously. Except when she wants to smoke and can't find a lighter.

"It was a tiny little fence, for God's sake!" she says breezily. "It's nothing to get worked up about."

"Don't you 'for God's sake' me! You're the one who threw shit at the police."

"Stop fussing. You sound like your mother. Do you have a lighter?"

"I'm seven!"

"How long are you going to use that as an excuse?"

"Until I'm not seven anymore?"

Granny mumbles something that sounds like "Not a crime to ask, is it?" and continues rifling through her pockets.

"I don't think you can smoke in here, actually," Elsa informs her, sounding calmer now and fingering the long rip in the Gryffindor scarf.

"Course you can smoke. We'll just open a window."

Elsa looks skeptically at the windows.

"I don't think they're the sort of windows that open."

"Why not?"

"They've got bars on them."

Granny glares with dissatisfaction at the windows. And then at Elsa.

"So now you can't even smoke at the police station. Jesus. It's like being in 1984."

Elsa yawns again. "Can I borrow your phone?"

"What for?"

"To check something."

"Where?"

"Online."

"You invest too much time on that Internet stuff."

"You mean, 'spend.'?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"What I mean is, you don't use 'invest' in that way. You wouldn't go round saying, 'I invested two hours in reading Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,' would you?"

Granny just rolls her eyes and hands her the phone. "Did you ever hear about the girl who blew up because she did too much thinking?"

The policeman who shuffles into the room looks very, very tired.

"I want to call my lawyer," Granny demands at once.

"I want to call my mum!" Elsa demands at once.

"In that case I want to call my lawyer first!" Granny insists.

The policeman sits down opposite them and fidgets with a little pile of papers.

"Your mother is on her way," he says to Elsa with a sigh.

Granny makes the sort of dramatic gasp that only Granny knows how to do.

"Why did you call her? Are you mad?" she protests, as if the policeman just told her he was going to leave Elsa in the forest to be raised by a pack of wolves. "She'll be bloody livid!"

"We have to call the child's legal guardian," the policeman explains calmly.

"I am also the child's legal guardian! I am the child's grandmother!" Granny fumes, rising slightly out of her chair and shaking her unlit cigarette menacingly.

"It's half past one in the morning. Someone has to take care of the child."

"Yes, me! I'm taking care of the child!" she splutters.

The policeman makes a fairly strained attempt to gesture amicably across the interrogation room.

"And how do you feel it's going so far?"

Granny looks slightly offended.

"Well . . . everything was going just fine until you started chasing me."

"You broke into a zoo."

"It was a tiny little fence—"

"There's no such thing as a 'tiny' burglary."

Granny shrugs and makes a brushing movement over the table, as if she thinks they've stretched this out long enough. The policeman notices the cigarette and eyes it dubiously.

"Oh, come on! I can smoke in here, can't I?"

He shakes his head sternly. Granny leans forward, looks him deep in the eyes, and smiles.

"Can't you make an exception? Not even for little old me?"

Elsa gives Granny a little shove in the side and switches to their secret language. Because Granny and Elsa have a secret language, as all grannies must have with their grandchildren, because by law that's a requirement, says Granny. Or at least it should be.

"Drop it, Granny. It's, like, illegal to flirt with policemen."

"Says who?"

"Well, the police for starters!" Elsa replies.



"The police are supposed to be there for the sake of the citizens," Granny hisses. "I pay my taxes, you know."

The policeman looks at them as you do when a seven-year-old and a seventy-seven-year-old start arguing in a secret language in a police station in the middle of the night. Then Granny's eyelashes tremble alluringly at him as she once again points pleadingly at her cigarette, but when he shakes his head, Granny leans back in the chair and exclaims in normal language:

"I mean, this political correctness! It's worse than apartheid for smokers in this bloody country nowadays!"

"How do you spell that?" asks Elsa.

"What?" Granny sighs as you do when precisely the whole world is against you, even though you pay taxes.

"That apartight thing," says Elsa.

"A-p-p-a-r-t-e-i-d," Granny spells.

Elsa immediately Googles it on Granny's phone. It takes her a few attempts—Granny's always been a terrible speller. Meanwhile the policeman explains that they've decided to let them go, but Granny will be called in at a later date to explain the burglary and "other aggravations."

"What aggravations?"

"Driving illegally, to begin with."

"What do you mean, illegally? That's my car! I don't need permission to drive my own car, do I?"

"No," replies the policeman patiently, "but you need a driver's license."

Granny throws out her arms in exasperation. She's just launched into another rant about this being a Big Brother society when Elsa whacks the phone sharply against the table.

"It's got NOTHING to do with that apartheid thing!!! You compared not being able to smoke with apartheid and it's not the same thing at all. It's not even CLOSE!"

Granny waves her hand resignedly.

"I meant it was . . . you know, more or less like that—"

"It isn't at all!"

"It was a metaphor, for God's sake—"

"A bloody crap metaphor!"

"How would you know?"

"WIKIPEDIA!"

Granny turns in defeat to the policeman. "Do your children carry on like this?" The policeman looks uncomfortable.

"We . . . don't let the children surf the Net unsupervised. . . ."

Granny stretches out her arms towards Elsa, a gesture that seems to say "You see!" Elsa just shakes her head and crosses her arms very hard.

"Granny, just say sorry for throwing turds at the police, and we can go home," she snorts in the secret language, though still very expressly upset about that whole apartheid thing.

"Sorry," says Granny in the secret language.

"To the police, not me, you muppet."

"There'll be no apologizing to fascists here. I pay my taxes. And you're the muppet." Granny sulks.

"Takes one to know one."

Then they both sit with their arms crossed, demonstratively looking away from each other, until Granny nods at the policeman and says in normal language:

"Would you be kind enough to let my spoilt granddaughter know that if she takes this attitude, she's quite welcome to walk home?"

"Tell her I'm going home with Mum and she's the one who can walk!" Elsa replies at once.

"Tell HER she can—"

The policeman stands up without a word, walks out of the room and closes the door behind him, as if intending to go into another room and bury his head in a large, soft cushion and yell as loud as he can.

"Now look what you did," says Granny.

"Look what YOU did!"

Eventually a heavysset policewoman with piercing green eyes comes in instead. It doesn't seem to be the first time she's run into Granny, because she smiles in that tired way so typical of people who know Granny, and says: "You have to stop doing this, we also have real criminals to worry about."

Granny just mumbles, "Why don't you stop, yourselves?" And then they're allowed to go home.

Standing on the pavement waiting for her mother, Elsa fingers the rip in her scarf. It goes right through the Gryffindor emblem. She tries as hard as she can not to cry but doesn't make much of a success of it.

"Ah, come on, your mum can mend that," says Granny, trying to be cheerful, giving her a little punch on the shoulder.

Elsa looks up anxiously.

“And, you know . . . we can tell your mum the scarf got torn when you were trying to stop me climbing the fence to get to the monkeys.”

Elsa nods and runs her fingers over the scarf again. It didn't get torn when Granny was climbing the fence. It got torn at school when three older girls who hate Elsa without Elsa really understanding why got hold of her outside the cafeteria and hit her and tore her scarf and threw it down the toilet. Their jeers are still echoing in Elsa's head. Granny notices the look in her eyes and leans forward before whispering in their secret language:

“One day we'll take those losers at your school to Miamas and throw them to the lions!”

Elsa dries her eyes with the back of her hand and smiles faintly.

“I'm not stupid, Granny,” she whispers. “I know you did all that stuff tonight to make me forget about what happened at school.”

Granny kicks at some gravel and clears her throat.

“I didn't want you to remember this day because of the scarf. So I thought instead you could remember it as the day your Granny broke into a zoo—”

“And escaped from a hospital,” Elsa says with a grin.

“And escaped from a hospital,” says Granny with a grin.

“And threw turds at the police.”

“Actually, it was soil! Or mainly soil, anyway.”

“Changing memories is a good superpower, I suppose.”

Granny shrugs.

“If you can't get rid of the bad, you have to top it up with more goody stuff.”

“That's not a word.”

“I know.”

“Thanks, Granny,” says Elsa and leans her head against her arm.

And then Granny just nods and whispers: “We're knights of the kingdom of Miamas, we have to do our duty.”

Because all seven-year-olds deserve superheroes.

And anyone who doesn't agree needs their head examined.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Helga Lever:

Within other case, little people like to read book My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry. You can choose the best book if you'd prefer reading a book. As long as we know about how is important a book My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry. You can add expertise and of course you can around the world by just a book. Absolutely right, because from book you can learn everything! From your country right up until foreign or abroad you may be known. About simple point until wonderful thing you may know that. In this era, we can open a book or searching by internet gadget. It is called e-book. You can utilize it when you feel bored to go to the library. Let's go through.

#### Gregory Mackenzie:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry, you can enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

#### Patricia Henderson:

Reading a book to be new life style in this yr; every people loves to examine a book. When you learn a book you can get a wide range of benefit. When you read guides, you can improve your knowledge, because book has a lot of information in it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you want to get information about your research, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself read a fiction books, these us novel, comics, in addition to soon. The My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry offer you a new experience in reading a book.

#### Roosevelt Alday:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of sources to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher that print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended for your requirements is My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry this e-book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented how does the world has grown up. The words styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some study when he makes this book. That is why this book ideal all of you.

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