

Senior Division, Nonfiction  
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**Going Home (an excerpt)**

‘Are you sure you have to go?’

My mother held my hand tight as I swallowed back tears and gently withdrew from her embrace. In all of the years that I had been away from home, she had never questioned why I had to go back to Ontario after a visit. Mind you, she had never wanted me to leave home in the first place. Nor had she wanted me to leave the safety of Newfoundland to become a police officer in another Province. But despite all of that, she quietly accepted my decisions.

This most recent visit Home was different.

Mom had landed in hospital again. At 85, she had seen the inside of a hospital more in recent years than she had hoped she would in a lifetime. With each admission, I would drop everything and fly home. It got to the point where we would joke about it.

‘I know how to get you to come home!’ She’d say. I would pretend to scold her and warn her not to cry wolf too many times or I might just stay away next time. We both knew that I wouldn’t...couldn’t. Being away from my home in Newfoundland, my large family, for more than twenty-five years, Fear-Of-Missing-Out had become a part of my daily life long before Gen ‘Z’ had made it a cool idiom. And I did miss a lot. Birthdays, anniversaries, impromptu family gatherings, and so many other occasions, some seemingly meaningless at the time, of which memories are made. With each visit to Newfoundland, I noted the deepening wrinkles on my parents’ faces, the whiter hair, slower movements. Afterwards, heading back to the Mainland, I wondered if I would ever see them again. Such thoughts were swirling prominently as I left my mother’s bedside on that beautiful afternoon in May but I truly believed that I would see her again. I wish that I could go back to that day. I wish that I could relive many moments on that day and the days, weeks, months and years that preceded it.