

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, by Jonathan Safran Foer Essay

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Weird. If the relationship between the characters of Grandpa and Grandma could be described in one word, it would be weird. Then again, Jonathan Safran Foer's novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a shining example of everything unconventional, exploring the nuances of grief through multiple and varying perspectives, each with a unique approach that attempts to achieve recovery and solace. The relationship of Grandpa and Grandma is an example of one such attempt at recovery, one that tries desperately to reconcile past traumas, yet ultimately acts as a futile effort that harbors more grief and denial.

In order to delve into the relationship between Grandpa and Grandma, an understanding of their pasts is necessary. Both Grandpa and Grandma have harrowing experiences of the Dresden Bombing; however, each has a distinct response that initiates certain changes within them. Grandpa's narrative is a telling of a desperate search and rescue for Anna, which ultimately end in failure, disappointment, and grief. This later affects Grandpa, creating an "inability to let the unimportant things go [and] inability to hold on to the important things" (132). This incapability to come to terms with his past later translates in

Grandpa's relationship with Grandma. His constant search for reconciliation from that night in Dresden clearly hinders his ability to re-establish a true romantic [love](#) life with Grandma. This therefore inhibits his capacity to successfully move on and recover from Anna's death.

On the other hand, Grandma's situation reveals a different form of trauma. Her life in Dresden is largely centered around her sister, Anna. Grandma's sudden loss of Anna the night of the bombing and later the choice to leave her father behind...

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...the existence of binary restrictions prevents the relationship from developing. Grandpa and Grandma are stuck in an interstitial space, a rope that does not move in a game of tug of war. In questioning whether or not their relationship is something or nothing, Grandpa responds with, "Something...but I knew, in the most protected part of my heart the truth" (111). In contrast, Grandma tries to create a relationship that is "something." This thus creates a connection that is both something and nothing. This can be best explained by comparing this something-nothing relationship to a "rebound" act. Both Grandpa and Grandma try to move on from their past relationships by being with each other. But like many rebound relationships, they are usually merely physical and short lived. By using each other a method of healing, they seem to only cause further damage to themselves.

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