

## **Death Comes for the Best of Us**

The only expectable thing about death is that it is unexpected but unchanging, especially when you don't know it's coming at all. It comes, sweeps you off of your feet and into a whirlwind of things you aren't willing to discuss like a will, the questions that you didn't ask, the lost recipes only in their heads, what you want, how you feel, that you weren't ready. You will never be ready. You can never be ready. Your grandmother means too much to you, and she was not sick.

You don't want to discuss why you didn't go to the funeral because your reasons are infantile. You don't want to go to the funeral because it means she is gone and you aren't ready to accept it. It means you cannot visit. It means no one will answer the house phone anymore. It means no more full Thanksgivings, no more buying extra fish to make sure she eats. It means you have no one to give buttercups to, no reason to stop by her house just because you wanted to hear the story about why she kept a gun in her dresser even though you've heard it a million times; to hear it through older ears is a gift.

You don't discuss her beauty because people tell you that you look like a younger version of her, high yellow, high cheekbone, fair hair, slightly wide nose, warm eyes, and that she's beautiful even though she's passed. They tell you that she still looked good in her casket. You already know that you are beautiful and don't want this comparison even though yes, you have her cheeks and her eyes and her skin. Her skin that was always so soft with shea butter. You are who you've lost; you just don't know it yet. Or maybe you do and don't want to acknowledge or admit it. Or you acknowledge it but are scared as hell and don't want to turn into everything she once was, but you will. This is your first real loss; it is about you too.

You are the devoted wife, though you are not yet married and never expect to be. You are the best mother imaginable though your womb has never been full. You are the greatest grandmother although no one has the opportunity to call you “Grams.” And you are the grandmother that will let your perfect grandchildren lay in the bed with you and watch the summer Olympics because it was too hot to take them to the park. You are the perfectionist who wants plastic slipcovers over the furniture to keep it as vintage and as 50s as possible.

You are, at most, the exact thing you never thought you’d be, and you enjoy it for the sake of that one last connection.

**Excerpt from a manuscript titled *A Good Girl's Inheritance***

I like the way men feel pressed up against me. I feel dirty just saying that, guilty that I can enjoy the opposite sex because of my queerness and the way I love women just a little too much. Men feel protective, raw, primal, hungry. They are hungry. But they are also safe. There is something about a man that women can't do for me. I'm not sure exactly what it is, but I want to find it because I want to stop using them for it. I don't like to.

What I don't like about men is that when they see a woman, the same area of the brain lights up as when they see cell phones and power tools. I am not meant to be used unless I want to be used.

When I went to Jamaica and walked around the town of Lucea every day, the men were terrible. When all fifteen people in the group were together, I didn't have many problems. We were all getting called "white girls" (even though half of us weren't) and the bigger ones of us were getting called "fatty boom boom," but that didn't bother me. Well, it did. But if you have a body that men appreciate, they tend to make it known. When we split up from the larger group into pairs or small groups of three or four, men seemed to multiply and leer and jeer. Sometimes they didn't say anything and only looked, but I could feel it happening. It wasn't my first time on the street, and I did mostly wear skirts a little bit too short for the conservative area.

"Hey! You and me - we connect?"

"Pretty and special girl like you, you say you're looking for something in the store to jump out at you. You should be watchin' watch out for me."

A warning.

I center myself with an inhale, flutter my eyelashes as I look for a way out, smile without teeth, and shuffle out of the tent, back to my group, back to the bus. At least I know the men in the States, the ones I can go to and be at least a notch above a steak. I will have some control then.