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Schrödinger's Daughter

by

Christina Angeli

A Creative Writing Project

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Department of English Language, Literature, and Creative Writing

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts at the

University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2017

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Schrödinger's Daughter

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

"Schrödinger's Daughter," explores the societal norms which govern grief and mourning. The project, which is comprised of a series of interconnected short stories and found text prose poems, follows a family dealing with the loss of their patriarch. The narrative is told through the perspective of the three remaining immediate family members: Trista, the deceased's daughter, acts as primary narrator, while Brigitte, the wife, and Ulisse, the son, act as secondary narrators. Each story weaves together to create a multilayered representation of the public and private grieving process, often reinterpreting events through multiple perspectives, illustrating the varied nature of grief. Through these speculative pieces, I develop a critique of performative cultural practices, such as funerals and wakes, which regulate the way individuals mourn on a public level and how these public practices weave into the private expressions of grief.

The accompanying critical essay, "Act 'Sad' the Neighbours are Watching: Writing About the Performative Societal and Linguistic Conventions which Govern Death, Grief, and Mourning in *Schrödinger's Daughter,*" breaks the critique down into three main avenues: 1) exploring how grief operates as a performative action within societal systems such as the workplace, the neighbourhood, social media, and healthcare; 2) the utilization of elements of magical realism on a macro level (narrative and structure) to create defamiliarization and promote critical reception in an audience; 3) and the utilization of elements of speculative fiction on a micro level (language and metaphor) to compound defamiliarization and reinforce my critical aim.

DEDICATION

I dedicated this project to my brother, Nicholas; my mother, Elizabeth; and especially, my father, Frank.

This wouldn’t exist without you.

Thank you, Frankie Baby.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the University of Windsor and the Department of English Language, Literature, and Creative Writing for providing me with the space, resources, and freedom to pursue this project. I would like to extend special thanks to my advisor, Nicole Markotić, who has been with me at every step of this process: from the final year of my undergraduate where the concept for this manuscript began to solidify to this year where that idea began to flourish into the text in your hands, she has provided me with better verbs than looking and made me aware of very "to be"; and Susan Holbrook, whose guidance in my graduate creative writing seminar helped mould this project further and made me unafraid to confront the banal. And finally, I would like to thank my family: thank you for supporting me and allowing me to take the hurt we've been through, that we're still going though, and make something from it.

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Vigil for the Moon

Three days before the ceremony, Mother informs the neighbours and The Homeowner's Association. Starting with the Collins family. Trista's delicate and gentle mother shrouded in oxblood red, the silver dagger already strapped to her waist. Shoulders sinking with the mantle of widow. Trista and Ulisse at Mother's side, stepping left to her left, right to her right. They tell those in close proximity to the house, and those who will smell the smoke and see the flicker of the flame (The Collins, the Yangs, the Johnstons, the Lauriers). Or possibly peppered in the ash (the Joneses, the Grants, the Stevenses). Each neighbour opens their doors, brows concern creased and eyes hungry.

"Oh dear, has he passed? How if you don't mind us asking" They all ask.

"Yes, he goes to the hunt now." All Mother can say, ignoring the question. Sister and brother take turns with the next part.

"He'll burn in three days, the 28th." And with that the family departs to the next house.

They leave a buzz of whispers in their wake. Come watch the cultists. The family now a novelty on the block: more of a juicy tidbit than Mr. Collins's affair and subsequent divorce from Mrs. Collins last spring. Few worship the old gods the way this family worships. Few pay their faith with blood: Mrs. Levesque fainted when she went to ask for lawn bags and found them skinning a deer in their backyard. The sacerdos have lost their Rex Nemorensis. Hunters falter when they lose their king. Sister, brother, and mother/wife: a solemn procession shuffling from house to house in a public display of their loss, as tradition decrees. But they keep their grief under the porch.

“Can you two get the bows from the basement and hook them to the fence posts and the alter?” Mother stands in the middle of the backyard, right where the swing set used to sit, willow tall directing brother and sister back and forth as they shift kindling piles and hang ceremonial bows along the fence. There’s a hastily drawn diagram courtesy of Carlo detailing where to erect the altar and pyre. Also helpful notes about pleasing rack and bow arrangements: 6 bows per rack, three arrows titled across each bow; how to place the banners: frame the altar; and how to weave flowers into the antlers: marigolds, beebalm, but never toadflax.

Trista’s twisting the petals off one of the bloodroot arrangements. Undoing her busy work of hours before. Unmaking and waiting. Her arms start to itch, but fingers keep twisting and untwisting blossoms until her lap is littered in torn yellows, pinks and carmines. The sky still the same stretch of smoke boarded with flame. Antler tips dig into her calves, she’s nested in bone.

He hated bloodroot.

Rip. Twist. Wait.

Her hair smells like smoke, her mourning clothes stained. Blood tracing twitching patterns in black. Red martyr hands. Viscera lodged to the nail beds. She doesn’t flinch like she thought she would, her own silver dagger never faltering. No flipping stomach or desperate demands for Purell like she’s sure Ryan would have emitted, he’s a vegetarian now, because of his new flame. She knows this because they happen to share the same Restoration Drama lecture, and New Girlfriend made a class announcement about the

cruelties of bear baiting. She cups the blood, letting it drip and pool. More kin to bear and dog than girl. Dried flakes of copper brown, she wonders if her classmates would notice if she never washed this night from her hands. Sneaking her clan into the 21st century, fleck by fleck. Make them all carry a talisman of the hunt on their body. She'd give Sarah, the girl who sits in front of her during Rhetoric, the bloody chalice: something to sip her lattes in. Dave, the boy who has a tendency to man-splain in Gender and Lit, would take a trophy tongue; muscle still dripping saliva. Ryan gets a rack strapped to his crown; let him carry the weight of something beyond himself for once. New Girlfriend can have one arrow, for when it's her turn to be the new ex.

Maybe Trista was made for bow strings after all. Because she feels miles away from the girl who used to dismiss waking up at 5:30 am and driving out to the county to sit in blinds and wade through fields as not for her. "Who finds solace in mud and blood?" she asked when a cousin opted for the traditional engagement ceremony. Now, it tempers her inhales. Her father might have always seen in her this girl who can bare the weight of a god in her spine and bows in her sternum.

She's still waiting.

The yard smells like copper.

Red slashes oxidize into brown leaving the altar muddy with sacrifice.

The pyre still burns.

The wake still rages. Nothing like war stories between brothers in arms. Nino, Dad's hunting buddy from a misspent youth of fletching and chaos, weaves his version of how Dad's sliver tongue and crack shot managed to win them that game of pool back

in college, since Ulisse's earlier telling missed several key details. Her father is Jupitar this night: capable of lightning, the reason for all their boyhood success and the rallying call that connects into adulthood. Another toast rings beyond the screen door into the backyard. They've found another bottle of Scotch or possibly grappa. Ulisse cuts Nino off and begins the saga of the day they decided to drag race the chariots outside the temple with her father leading the charge. Ghosts are given no chance to linger, banished with a boozy exorcism.

The screen door squeals as a body shuffles outside. "Why aren't you inside?" Her brother holds a tumbler of amber liquid in his hands. Scotch then. And still a small streak of blood on his thumb.

"I'm guarding his way home." She's sitting on the deck he built for her and her brother over the sandbox he built for them first. In the space between flame and sky, smoke curls and dips, embers sparking like fireflies.

He used to help her catch fireflies in Nonno and Nonna's backyard.

"That's what the flames are for. Why we sacrificed those bulls. Diana knows he's coming, she'll welcome him home."

"I know," Trista says, "but, I'm waiting anyway. I'm waiting for the moon to be sure."

She expects her brother to go soon after that. No reason for Ulisse to linger, not while there's fire in his veins and stories to be told with the rest of the hunt. But the nervous clink of ice cubes against glass tells her he's staying.

"There's someone out front." His gruff voice catches on 'someone', getting extra sandpapery on that first syllable, "Asking for you."

Her chin rises, posture following suit, “I’ll go through the side gate.” She’s not surprised that she’s being summoned. She dealt with the rental company for the chairs, and all six casseroles brought out “just in case!” Her thin veneer of pooling ice and ability to still smile when asked “how’re you holding up?” and “how did it happen?” make her the ambassador for nosey neighbours and concerned friends. “Who’s with Mom?”

“One of the aunties.”

“Good. Keep her attention inside.”

“Will do, kiddo.”

She rises from her seat, thighs twinging and imprinted with slats. She skirts around Ulisse, pulled from the pyre and already reaching past the gate. There’s work to be done and this she can do. The weight of his hand, the weight of that bloody thumb, on her shoulder putting the siblings in step today. He pushes the tumbler into her hand. She gulps down half the glass, harsh liquid cutting a path from throat to stomach and sparking at the gut. An answering sharp curve of lips. The mask won’t be so cool tonight.

Her brother never said who waited out front. She stumbles as she makes her way around kindling piles and reaches for the side gate’s rusty latch. Could be Mrs. Alvarez from six doors down. The elderly woman means well, treats Mother like her own soft-spoken daughter, but she’s set in her staunch Catholic ways. Even the constant stream of casserole dishes and prayers hint at Old Testament judgment. But Mrs. Alvarez, for all she worries about their eternal souls, respects tradition. Her own Sunday ritual symbolizes blood; she won’t spit on theirs even if they take their blood and booze literally.

And not the Yangs, their immediate neighbours to the left. Stuart, with their baby boy comfortable in his arms, and Jen, with her hand tucked into her husband's pocket, caught her this morning while she cleared out space in the garage to stash the patio furniture. Pyres take up more room than you think. She superimposes images of her father and mother and brother and her over the Yang family and she lets that picture scratch at her ribs in her mother's honour.

"We're lighting incense in your father's honour tonight," Stewart declares.

Jen cuts off her thanks. A soft delicate hand and a slim wedding ring rest against her cheek. "Don't thank us. It's the least we can do. If you need anything, just let us know."

Trista can feel that wedding ring on her molars, she opens her mouth to respond; a shiver building from cheek to spine. But Jen cuts in once more, "Focus on your family tonight, sweetheart. This is for you. No one else." Then the Yangs leave.

No, after that, not the Yangs.

Maybe the Smiths or the Vandecamps or the Millers or the Bauders. It could be any of them. Curiosity hasn't exactly been subtle. She's been questioned at the mailbox almost daily. Thursday: "What will happen to the remains?" Because that's something they're apparently allowed to ask. Friday: "Is it true that you burn things with him?" Sure, you want to be one of them? This morning: "Do you really kill the bulls yourself?" No, we bring in a special-effects make up team from Hollywood. It's all props and corn syrup dyed red. Every day: a totally *sincere* inquiry into her wellbeing.

There's only so many ways to inflect, "But how are you *really* doing?"

Musing carries her past the gate and into the crowded driveway. She can just glimpse the top of a head beyond the forest of cars crowding the concrete. The chariots have gone back to the temple, no longer idling in the middle of the street. Nothing left but the perfectly suburban. Any other house and the crowd of cars would herald a happy celebration. A reunion, a retirement party, a birthday. It should've been a belated birthday, a 65th in fact. Should've been. But this pack of cars and trucks, all speckled with mud at the wheel wells but shining proud and crowned with racks, don't' gather here to celebrate with the man, but to puzzle at the lack of him.

Trista pauses amid the steel sentinels. It's Ryan. Ryan Collins waiting at the end of her driveway. He doesn't notice her sheltered in racks and frames; he's fiddling with his pockets, thumb nail biting into index finger and sliding across sweaty palm. Ryan always does that when he's nervous; she's surprised he isn't emitting uncertain chuckles; usually he'd be popping from the diaphragm. The June to October frosts haven't done him justice. Brown hair still crew-cut athlete. Khaki clad in a golf club approved polo, a lurid blue that muddies moss eyes, still attractive even with that plastic sheen. The shoes seem new though, must be the new girlfriend's influence.

"Ryan." No cleared throat here or a deliberate weighting of steps. Not tonight and not for him.

He startles. Scared little rabbit, she can hear her brother scoff. For the first time she finds herself agreeing: gutless little bunny. He hops from the door to her. He's still achingly familiar, but she must register as completely foreign to him now. Gone is her carefully curated make-up, and styled outfits. Instead, she's how her father liked her best: brown strands falling past collar bones, pushed back and waving in defiance of years of

taming heat, there's a chunk of connective tissue just above her ear, and a fresh make-up-less face, the freckles she usually erases indistinguishable from the arterial spray across her nose. Clad in a ground skimming robe, layers of red so deep it reads as black, her figure obscured in a way that her usual skinny jeans couldn't. She knows she smells like smoke, the char wafting from fabric and body. She feels the tacky pull of blood and ash slashed on her cheeks and forehead, gloved from finger tips to elbow in a rapidly oxidizing mixture. What's this civilised boy makes of her now?

Ryan's eyes have caught on her bare feet, but he doesn't say a thing.

"You need something?" The moon could come any moment and she will not miss it.

"I'm sorry about your dad."

"Thank you." Not what she should be waiting for. "You need something?"

He shuffles again. Gaze darting from her feet to her collar bones to her hair. He can't read her for shit, but she still has his tells imprinted on her teeth. "Mom was wondering if you guys could quiet it down."

"Why?"

The question pitches him into fight or flight, "Uhm… She has work early and I've got classes too? And I totally understand what you guys are going through, this is obviously a very tough time and you guys need to do what you need to do, but we… I … could you mind the noise?"

She considers Ryan's crawling back to the "I." He takes her tragedy and moulds it into something he can own; his lack of sleep, her of a father.

"No."

“What? But I—”

“We posted the funeral banns. That public notice on our lawn went up two hours after he died. You can read it every time you walk to the mailboxes.” Where Ryan used to hide dried leaves and rose petals for her.

“I know, but—”

“You need something else?”

“No, I mean I wanted to see how you’re really doing…”

“How do you think?”

“That’s not fair.”

“Too bad.”

There’s nothing left in her here, not for him, not now.

“Goodbye Ryan.”

She has better things to wait for.

Back in front of the pyre once, she twists Ryan’s—no the Collins’s—request through her incisors. They were given warning. Nothing for them to complain about. They haven’t had to sit by hospital beds while nurses whisper over the handmade bone and herb charms well-wishing aunties tie to the metal bed railings. Haven’t pulled pens from Mother’s hands when she fails to summarize a life in a paragraph of newsprint. Hasn’t gathered into a formal circle with temple elders trying to pin-point the wishes of a man who can’t speak for himself, before his body had even gone cold. Trying to channel a whole entire man into chants and perfume and animal regalia and two-syllable adjectives.

“How will you honour his life? A traditional ceremony of course, yes?”

Father always complained that funeral ceremonies run too long. Too public. In the hospital, he says he doesn’t want fuss, but something small. Intimate. Just the family. A short ceremony and short words. And the hunt.

“Should the chariots follow the traditional processional route or should they stop at the charm store? The locksmith? The Casino?”

“Will there be a procedural viewing?”

“Would you like to include a photo, a pocket watch, a spear head in the casket? Some token to show what he loved.”

We want to say us. But we settle for a pack of cigarettes, one of his Roman coins, and the last picture of all four of us from Ulisse’s graduation.

“What will make this process easier for you?”

Bring him back.

City officials ask the same questions:

“How long will the ceremony at your residence last?”

“Can you give a limit to how tall the flames will reach?”

“Have you scheduled an appointment with a property inspector?”

“Have you begun the permit process for the open burn to occur?”

“Have you obtained the permit to allow the chariots to enter into a residential area?”

“The city requires a minimum of three days’ notice: flyers, as well as a sign on your property.”

Apparently, death requires months of preplanning.

Everything burns in the end. He's almost gone, casket nothing but embers and bones popping marrow.

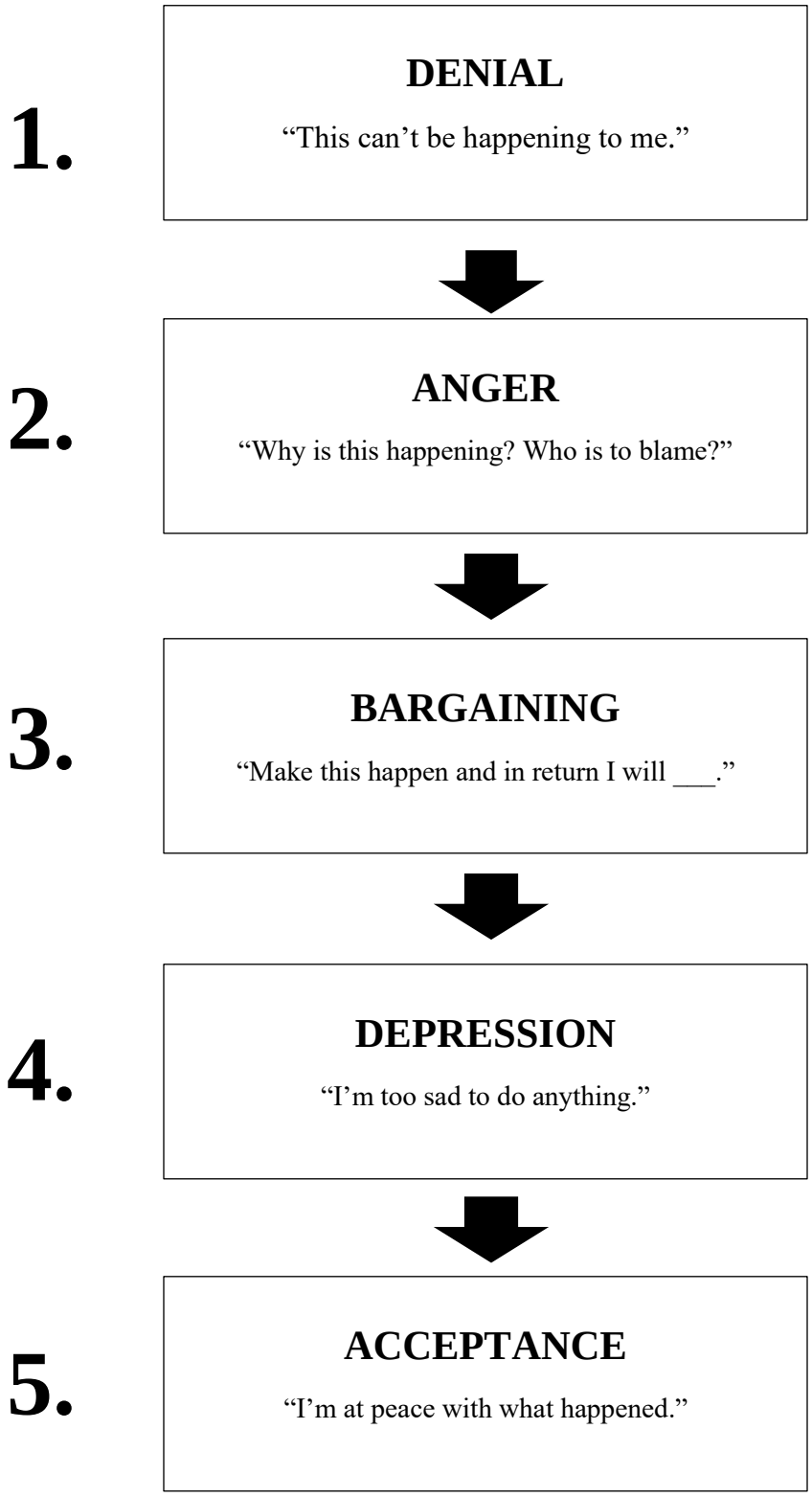
Flame and incense curl bloody and black. The air tastes of pennies and sage. Spice. Power, a streaming forest fire from tongue and hand. The pyre still going and she's too caught in monitoring the sparks and her vigil for the sky when the doe quietly approaches. Delicately emerging from the oaks. Her brother would have shot it, but she holds out her moss covered sleeves. Stopping just at the edge of the flames, the doe bows. Then scents, tipping nose to the stars.

Through the smoke, the moon.

Sit tibi terra levis. May the ground rest lightly upon you. Diana's will.

The embers hum.

Projected Progression through Grief, Bastardized from Kübler-Ross by Armchair Psychologists Everywhere: A Flow Chart



Projected Progression through ~~Grief~~ Bereavement, According to Hospice:
A Flow Chart

1.

SHOCK AND NUMBNESS

Family members find it difficult to believe the death; they feel stunned and numb.



2.

YEARNING AND SEARCHING

Survivors experience separation anxiety and cannot accept the reality of the loss. They try to find and bring back the lost person and feel ongoing frustration and disappointment when this is not possible.



3.

DISORGANIZATION AND DESPAIR

Family members feel depressed and find it difficult to plan for the future. They are easily distracted and have difficulty concentrating and focusing.



4.

REORGANIZATION

Figure it out yourself.

Belonging(s)

"Would Wednesday be a good day for you guys to come and grab his things?"

Ulisse feels like a deer, just like that first doe Dad taught him to butcher. A bolt to the eye and left gapping and gutted. *Wednesday?*

"I'll have to check with Mom."

"Ok, let us know. We're moving Vincenzo into that office."

"Yeah, no. We'll let you know soon."

"Ok."

"Ok."

He peers at Ulisse's eyes, seems to linger around the brows and at the corners of his mouth, "You're doing good kid." And with a hearty smack to the shoulder, the new temple president heads back to his table.

Dad's table. With the whole family's initials on the left table leg that Ulisse started carving in a fit of preteen boredom, and Trista coloured in when her Barbie colouring book proved to be a less than challenging canvas. Dad just laughed. Called it their table for good. They never sat anywhere else after that.

Ulisse would sit there today, but as he and the boys trailed into the member's bar their table, Dad's table, was already occupied. The wrong glass creating rings on the scarred oak table top. The wrong brand of cigarettes gasping into ashtrays. The wrong pair of loafers scuffing at ceramic floors. The wrong initials.

"You ok, bro?" one of his buddies asks.

"Fine," he mutters through a gulp of scotch. As palm presses against a too-smooth table edge.

If he slams the tumbler down harder than he should, the boys don't mention it.

It's empty.

The Searchers poster gone: just nails and dark rectangle phantoms left on the walls to mark where vintage firearm diagrams hung between crayon family portraits and vacation photos (Disney, San Diego, bucket hats and sunscreen-cloaked noses). The green vinyl covered office chair not creaking. Bookshelves clear for the first time he can remember, the picture frames and ash trays and coasters Ulisse and Trista fashioned from popsicle sticks and grade school encouragement not acting as bookends for WWII memoirs and Tom Clancy paperbacks. Not an empty office, but a vacated one. An abandoned office, a former-but-no-longer office.

"Can you get the last set of boxes?" Trista pokes her head around the door jamb.

It's still Dad's office. Even if the name plate is gone, spirited away as Mom went to double check with the receptionists to see if any of the furniture needed to go as well (fuck, let's take it all). Even if all the desk drawers had been emptied of their pens and files and cigar boxes and key rings into nondescript brown boxes. Even if the window was cracked open to let fresh air in instead of funneling smoke trails out.

Still his.

Still.

"Uly, can you just grab something please?" Pushing her way past him as he stands stag still in the doorway, Trista snaps from behind a tower of boxes, grabbing handfuls of any old thing.

She butts the stack in her hands into his chest, making sure to rap against the sternum just enough so his breath cracks out in a single puff. "If you won't help pack, start taking boxes to the car."

"Who died and made you queen?" snarling Ulisse grips the boxes, pulling them even tighter to his chest so the edge digs between his ribs.

Trista huffs and sweeps back into the office, "Do something, would you? And while you're at it get better comebacks." She's an acidic little thing, his sister.

Acidic but not wrong.

With a huff of his own, he resettles the boxes and stomps back toward the car, each step putting distance between him and that yawning gap of an ex-office.

The boxes take up residence in the basement only for a couple days.

A couple days to let the boxes assimilate to the house. Let the house assimilate to the boxes. Get used to the idea that books and keys and locks and flashlights don't live in the drawers and shelves where he put them.

Ulisse expects them to stay put. He expects Mom to horde and hide them. Cardboard more precious than any gold. Letting them collect dust and wait until she's ready to crack them open, clean them off, absorb the warmth of what Dad left behind, and pass that on to Trista and him in careful doses. A brand-new flashlight here, a garage-

sale paperback there. They'll keep the heat that way. Crisp and crackling. Each item prompting a Scotch shot that sizzles and blooms from the gut outward.

But she doesn't.

Mom dives right in, sorting and cataloguing, listing the inventory of what he's left behind. Box after box. Dividing the contents into a new set of clearly labelled plastic bins with air-tight lids: Keep, Donate, Throw out.

Keep: hunting knife. Donate: paperbacks. Throw out: crumpled magazine article about barbequing salmon. Keep: silver coin from 1895. Donate: drill bit set. Throw out: empty Bic lighters. Keep: brass lantern. Donate: 6 flashlights. Throw out: scribbled reminder to pick up milk. Donate: beige puffy winter coat with too long sleeves and a stain on the bottom hem. Throw out: a pair of silk thermal leggings with blown out toes. Throw out: copy of Cabela's catalogue from 1984. Throw out: cracked Tim Horton's travel mug. Donate: three pairs of never worn Levi's jeans. Throw out: empty gas station lighter shaped like a pin-up girl. An endless cycle with the piles growing larger and larger.

Ulisse only steals from two of those piles.

"Ulisse, would you want this?" Mom hovers over his shoulder. He hears the nervous tick of her house shoes against the plastic floor mat.

"Want what?" He types another line into the report. Each blink of the curser prompting an answering twitch in his left nostril.

"Well, it's Dad's—"

"I don't have the time."

“But—”

“Mom, at work, I got assigned another project on top of the one I already have, they’re implemented daily progress logs for the codes which I have to fill out, one of the servers went down for two hours, and I’m secondary on-call for the rest of the week because the person who’s supposed to do it has the flu. It’s a lot. It’s stressful. I’ll look later.”

“Ok.”

He hears the brush of her house shoes from plastic to carpet to hardwood, characteristic loud stomping steps, meek and quiet.

He’ll look later. Just later.

Much later. Maybe just reach in and transfer from one bin to the other.

(Why can’t it all stay?)

Ulisse gathers his Under Armour boxer briefs, an over-sized t-shirt, and his mustard coloured towel to go to the gym. Then mixes his preworkout at the kitchen counter, hovering over the wooden cutting board. Scoop, stir, drink.

Mom and Trista are in the living room. The hum of some cooking competition almost drowning out their murmur.

“I found the oddest thing in Dad’s things last night.” Mom forms that single syllable as lovingly as she can.

“Yeah?”

“Mhm, this old beat up gas mask.”

It’s a gas mask from WWI.

“Really? Why’d you think he had it?”

“I’d never seen it before; your father must have bought it before we started dating.”

He bought it at auction.

“It was so damaged though; I had to throw it out.”

Throw it out?

“Too bad. Would’ve been a cool thing to keep in the family.”

It was supposed to.

“It would’ve…Oh! Michelle had the best story abou—”

“You threw it out?”

“Pardon honey?”

“You threw it out.”

“Yes?”

“It was supposed to be mine. You had no right!”

“I’m—”

“We were going to… we were going to…”

Going to restore it. Already spent hours meticulously searching through the internet, talking to amateur historians and hobbyists on forums, while Dad highlighted and circled examples in auction catalogues. Already picked out a display case in the Lee Valley catalogue (dark stained maple with antique brass hardware). It was theirs. It was his. It. Was. His.

“—sorry.”

“We’d just ordered the stand!”

"I don't—"

"It wasn't yours to throw away!"

Mom starts leaving notes. Two- or three-line missives, signed with a heart, and stuffed underneath the latest artifact from the boxes. The latest:

Ulisse,

I found this. Thought you might want to take a look.

Mom <3

left on his desk, underneath a set of Allen keys, butting up against his keyboard.

Allen keys. Allen keys are important. Grease stained fingers quick and sure, teaching him to take the measure of when a twist has gone too tight or not tight enough.

Allen keys must stay.

Ulisse brings the set down the stairs and to the basement. He shoves them back into one of the boxes near the bottom of the pile, under the Cabela's catalogue from yesterday, the red flannel shirt from Tuesday, the shark tooth paper weight etched with a battleship from Monday, the dog-eared copy of *Band of Brothers* from Sunday.

They're not leaving yet.

They're not leaving yet.

Service Canada

PROTECTED B (when completed)
Personal Information Bank ESDC PPU 146

"One last gift from your Father"

Application for a Canada Pension Plan Child's Benefit

(BENEFIT FOR CHILD AGE 18 TO 25 AND IN FULL TIME ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY)
THIS APPLICATION MUST BE SUPPORTED BY A DECLARATION OF ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY FORM

It is very important that you:

- send in this form with supporting documents (see the information sheet for the documents we need); **and**
- use a **pen** and **print** as clearly as possible.

SECTION A - INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

A. ⊗ séance or medium

1A. Contributor's Social Insurance Number	1B. Sex	1C. Preferred language for correspondence
two weeks past 65	⊗ Male ○ Female	B. ⊗ English ○ French

2. ⊗ Mr. ○ Mrs. ○ Ms. ○ Miss — Usual First Name and Initial	Last Name
Dad Daddy Pops	Ours

3. Contributor's Address (No., Street, Apt., R.R.)	City
On top of the dresser, below the wedding portrait	Next to their bed (his side)

4. Province or Territory	Country other than Canada	Postal Code
In their bedroom	Whatever comes next	N

SECTION B - INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD OF THE CONTRIBUTOR

5A. Child's Social Insurance Number	5B. Sex
4-1=3 1 of 3	○ Male ⊗ Female only daughter

6. ○ Mr. ○ Mrs. ○ Ms. ○ Miss — Usual First Name and Initial	Last Name
He chose her name, picked it and said this is my little girl	

7. Home Address if different from 3 above (No., Street, Apt., R.R.)	City
Sitting in the kitchen	in his seat

Province or Territory	Country other than Canada	Postal Code
now her seat (First transfer of ownership)	our home (still his too)	N

8. Mailing Address for cheque if different from 7 above (No., Street, Apt., R.R.)	City
Still his	Still ours

Province or Territory	Country other than Canada	Postal Code
Still home	still	N

9A. Are you disabled? Emotionally? ○ Yes ○ No	9B. Date of Birth YYYY MM DD	AGE ESTABLISHED (FOR OFFICE USE ONLY)
	Can we skip it this year?	one week before 21

10A. Are or were you ever a beneficiary or an applicant for a benefit under:	Canada Pension Plan?	Quebec Pension Plan?	10B. If yes, under what Social Insurance Number
	○ Yes ⊗ No	○ Yes ⊗ No	Only had the one Father

11. Are you a natural child of the contributor? Used to call her magic	⊗ Yes ○ No	If you were legally adopted, please indicate the date of adoption.	YYYY MM DD
			N/A

SECTION C - DECLARATION OF APPLICANT

12. I hereby apply for a Disabled Contributor's Child's Benefit. ☐ I hereby apply for a Surviving Child's Benefit. ☒ Trying to

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information given in this application is true and completed and I undertake to notify Service Canada of any changes in the circumstances which may affect eligibility.

NOTE: If you make a false or misleading statement, you may be subject to an administrative monetary penalty and interest, if any, under the *Canada Pension Plan,* or may be charged with an offence. Any benefits you received or obtained to which there was no entitlement would have to be repaid.

Student's Signature	Date of Application YYYY MM DD	Telephone Number
Daughter Former Daughter	too soon XX	XXX-XXX-XXXX

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY - DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Application taken by:		Date Application Received
Application approved pursuant to Subsection 59(3) of the Canada Pension Plan. Effective Date N/A (year) N/A (month)	Date N/A Authorized Signature N.A.	

Service Canada delivers Employment and Social Development Canada programs and services for the Government of Canada

SC ISP-1400 (2016-05-09) E

Disponible en français

Canada

Service Canada

$(♡ \times ⏱) - ☹^{0} = \$?$

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILD'S BENEFIT

PLEASE RETAIN FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Your application form [redacted] submit [redacted] all the required documents as soon as possible. Failure [redacted] could result in delays or loss of payments. [redacted]

PRIVACY ACT AKA The variables used to determine validity / degree of Father-daughter connection

The *Privacy Act* gives all Canadians [redacted] information about themselves, held by the federal government. [redacted] which can be found in public libraries, federal government libraries, most post offices and in other government offices open to the public. Should you wish to exercise your right of access, you may do so by completing a "Personal Information Request" form indicating which information bank you wish to consult. ex. "Parental Relationships" "Future Goals" "Most Liked Novel"

PERSONAL INFORMATION BANK ESDC PPU 146 AKA How to calculate Father-daughter connection into #

[redacted] the application form will be used to determine your entitlement to receive a Child's Benefit under the *Canada Pension Plan*. Failure [redacted] may result in the denial of these benefits. The information provided will be retained in the above-noted bank. Under the *Privacy Act*, you have a right to obtain a copy of this record. or you could just check for it in the library.

PROOF OF AGE DOCUMENTATION Will saying he made it to my birthday cause a problem?

You do not need to provide proof of birth if you provided your Social Insurance Number in the application. However, the Canada Pension Plan has the right to request proof of birth at any time, when deemed necessary. [redacted] then you must submit **a certified true copy of your birth certificate**. If you have to send us documents, [redacted] send us certified photocopies [redacted] **we can only accept a photocopy if it is readable and if you have someone certify it as a true copy of the original.** Father to daughter paper trail made easy to follow from conception to bank.

If you can bring your original documents into any Service Canada office, our staff will photocopy the documents and certify them for free. [redacted] you can ask one of the following people to certify your photocopy: Accountant; Chief of First Nations Band; Commissioner for Oaths; Employee of a Service Canada Centre acting in an official capacity; Funeral Director; Justice of the Peace; Lawyer; Magistrate; Notary; Manager of a Financial Institution; Medical and Health Practitioner; Chiropractor, Dentist, Doctor, Naturopathic Doctor, Pharmacist, Psychologist, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse; Ophthalmologist, Optometrist, Member of Parliament or their staff; Member of Provincial Legislature or their staff; Minister of Religion; Municipal Clerk; Official of a federal government department or provincial government department, or one of its agencies; Official of an Embassy, Consulate or High Commission; Official of a country with which Canada has a reciprocal social security agreement; Police Officer; Postmaster; Professional Engineer; University Professor; Social Worker and Teacher. Medium. Grief Counselor, Plumber. Astrologist. Arbourist. Biologist. Geneticist.

People who certify photocopies have to compare the original document to the photocopy and provide the following information: State their official position or title; sign and print their name; provide their phone number; and include the date they certified the document(s). add to the paper trail.

They also have to write the following statement on the photocopy:
"This photocopy is a true copy of the original document which has not been altered in any way."

All Service Canada Offices can provide this service free of charge.

NOTE: If you make a false or misleading statement, you may be subject to an administrative monetary penalty and interest, if any, under the *Canada Pension Plan,* or may be charged with an offence. Any benefits you received or obtained to which there was no entitlement would have to be repaid.

If you require any assistance or further information to complete your application, please contact the nearest Service Canada Office. The telephone number and address are in the government listings of the telephone book.

SC ISP-1400A (2016-05-09) E

Canada

Service Canada

Service Canada Offices

Canada Pension Plan

her, them?

Mail your forms to:
The nearest Service Canada office listed below.
From outside of Canada: The Service Canada office in the **province where you last resided**.

Need help completing the forms?
Canada or the United States: **1-800-277-9914**
All other countries: **613-957-1954** (we accept collect calls)
TTY: **1-800-255-4786**
Important: Please have your social insurance number ready when you call.

Acceptable reasons to call?
- wondering if the time they fought over whether or not she could date that awkward drummer who was soooo dreamy when she was 15 will affect outcome?

charge more based on distance/distress?

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Service Canada
PO Box 9430 Station A
St. John's NL A1A 2Y5
CANADA

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Service Canada
PO Box 8000 Station Central
Charlottetown PE C1A 8K1
CANADA

NOVA SCOTIA
Service Canada
PO Box 1687 Station Central
Halifax NS B3J 3J4
CANADA

NEW BRUNSWICK AND QUEBEC
Service Canada
PO Box 250
Fredericton NB E3B 4Z6
CANADA

ONTARIO
For postal codes beginning with "L, M or N"
Service Canada
PO Box 5100 Station D
Scarborough ON M1R 5C8
CANADA

choose for irony alone ignore actual postal code

ONTARIO
For postal codes beginning with "K or P"
Service Canada
PO Box 2013 Station Main
Timmins ON P4N 8C8
CANADA

- do they know people call it the "orphan benefit"?

MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN
Service Canada
PO Box 818 Station Main
Winnipeg MB R3C 2N4
CANADA

ALBERTA / NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT
Service Canada
PO Box 2710 Station Main
Edmonton AB T5J 2G4
CANADA

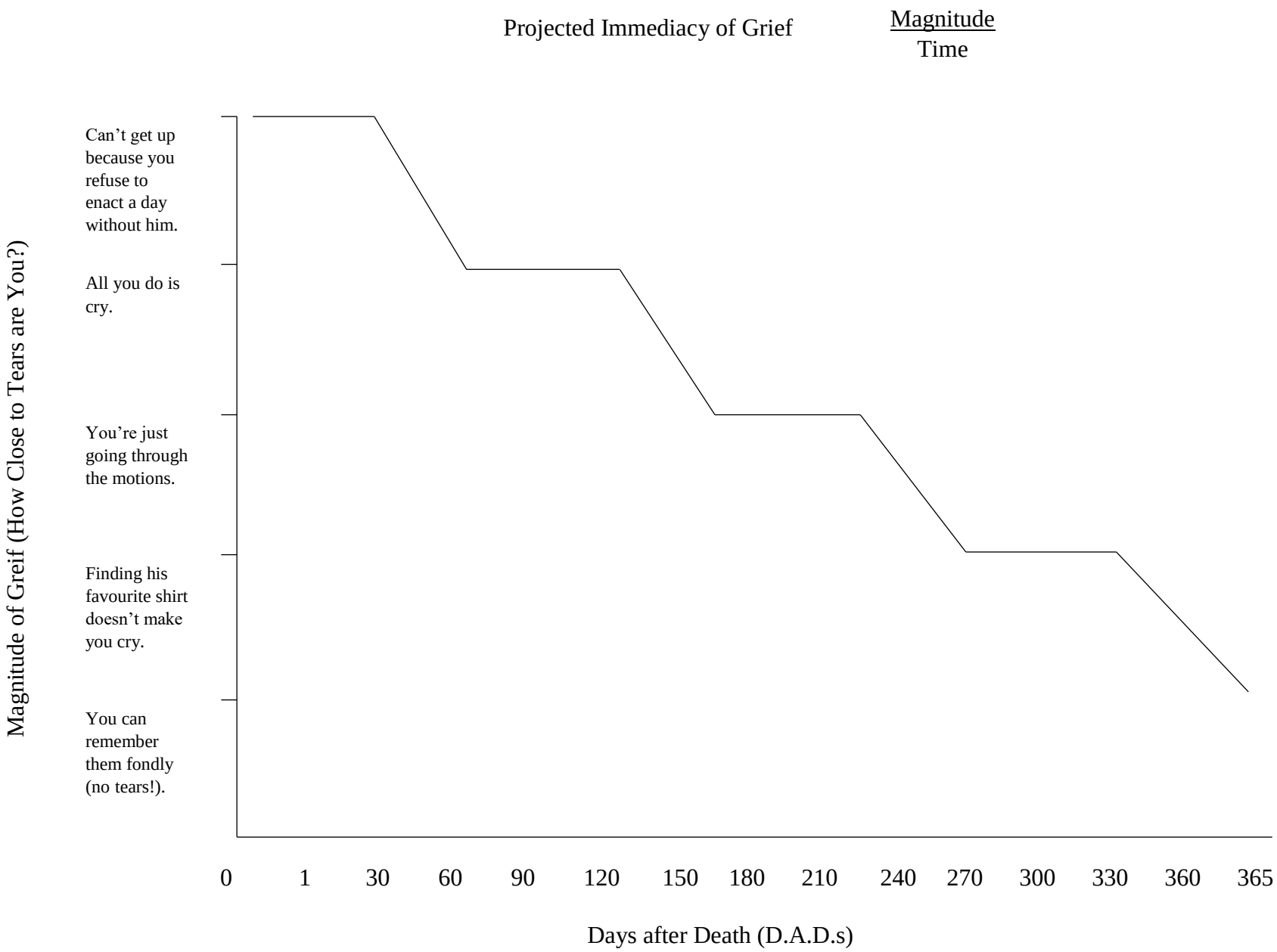
BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON
Service Canada
PO Box 1177 Station CSC
Victoria BC V8W 2V2
CANADA

- does this 1000% make her an orphan?
- is orphanhood passed through the Father?

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SC ISP-3501-CPP (2016-05-09) E

Canada


Projected Immediacy of Grief
Magnitude
Time
Magnitude of Greif (How Close to Tears are You?)
Can't get up because you refuse to enact a day without him.
All you do is cry.
You're just going through the motions.
Finding his favourite shirt doesn't make you cry.
You can remember them fondly (no tears!).
0
1
30
60
90
120
150
180
210
240
270
300
330
360
365
Days after Death (D.A.D.s)

O’ Death v. Toddlers

“…Where O’ Death is your victory? Where O’ Death is your sting?...’”

Mom worries at her lip as the priest weaves St. Paul and his Corinthians into his send off for Mrs. Schneider. Central and lateral incisors kneading to match the cadence of the verse.

“…The sting of death is sin…”

Tooth-pull.

“…and the power of sin is the Law…”

Lip-tuck.

Seeking the sting the padre seems to have lost. Head slightly bowed in respectful contemplation; a remnant of her own childhood faith. Not the same branch of Christianity as the Schneiders’ but close enough. Keeping focus forward, always forward, never letting attention wander to the empty spaces on the pew.

The screams of the various Schneider grandchildren and great grandchildren call to Trista more than the measured pleasant tones of the man at his pulpit. One of the great grandchildren, only 6 months old, gives the microphone and speaker set up a run for its money. His shrill screeches creating a counter rhythm, a little touch of chaos. His speech echoes from chancel to narthex, a progressive ricochet like the calls of gothic ghosts or the bloodied saints immortalized in stained glass. These wild little heathens sound like her brother and his friends before a night out or after a hunt. All piss and volume; vitality ringing from each twisting vocal cord. An accompanying howl builds at the base of Trista’s throat and bubbles under her tongue.

The howl stays trapped behind her uvula until she swallows it down. Trista feels the empty spaces of the pews just as much as her mother does. They're missing Ulisse's stoic bulk to shield them, but he'd cited impending deadlines to stay home. They're sitting at the back of the nave so the other mourners won't notice when neither of them stand for communion. The high backs of creaking wooden benches creating a barricade between believers and non; they're communing in the feeling but not the rites.

This isn't their show. The immediacy of their own loss supposedly tempered by months. Daughter's elbow brushes mother's through matching thin black cardigans.

"…But, thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Tension radiates from mother's elbow into daughter's. Tendons tighter than bow strings. Microscopic trembles vibrate the base of the pew; about a three on the Richter scale. At each peak, a thought loosens: why are we here? Mom gets glassier by the minute as the priest continues to lose the battle against toddler oration. But maybe this is what Mom needs: the faith she grew up with, the faith her parents were buried under, her faith, instead of her husband's. Breathing isn't that harsh pre-sob tempo that's been typical since he died. Glassy and trembling but it's only a three; Mom hasn't been at a three for a while.

Bible verses whisk away the cloudy mass of single coffee cups and missing ashtrays that underlie the loss. Mother, like Schneiders and their accompanying brood, lets these phrases work: syllables create gossamer thin threads of connection. Each utterance echoing back Sundays with her own parents. Shades of that communion settling into her skin: she is not just a widow, but a child of God. In these words, she isn't alone.

While Trista sits, heels tapping softly in time with the great-grandson's constant shrieks, her mother begins to mouth along to St. Paul presented by Father First-Name-Basis.

"…Therefore my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast and immovable. Always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain…"

Mom exhales a little. Each push outward falling in synch with the Schneiders in the seats at the front. Maybe they should've added a father to oversee their father off, Mom's very own surrogate St. Paul to stand amid the flames and flesh.

Maybe.

The Schneider great grandchildren take no heed of St. Paul. Tiny bodies spill into the aisles: the squirmy blond bowl-cut in the polka-dot bow tie and khakis that had been nine pews ahead of them now tears pages out of a hymn book, the white flower headband perched in oak waves with glittery purple Mary Janes that have butterfly buckles (eight pews ahead and to the left) is using a bright red crayon to scrawl a herd cats on those separated pages and the central aisle runner.

The senior Schneiders never leave their seats.

6 months still cries.

Her hands itch for a crayon of her own.

The cabin on the Envoy is freezer chilled. The AC cranked to combat June humidity, but her thighs still stick to the leather passenger side seat in an echo of the suction between quads and church pews. They're near the back end of the funeral procession (do you call it a convoy when it's funeral vehicles? Or is that insensitive?).

The little purple flag flaps listlessly on the hood of the SUV; mud flaps gleam factory pristine, no racks to be found, perfectly generic. Mom made sure to scrub the truck from axel to axel, the faint scent of Armour All wafting from between body panel joints.

The column of purple flags inches forward intersection by intersection. Thirty kilometres per hour. Snails in a rat race. A rusty beige Buick cuts them off as the column tries to make a left, a bird flies out of the driver's side window.

The response is a chorus of chirping car horns.

Senior Schneiders still in a column, delicately picking their way around grave markers and placards. A shuffling procession of black and grey shrouds. Brogues and sensible black pumps sticking to grassy borders. The miniature versions trotting wherever they please. Patent red Mary Janes step on Mr. Clemmons. Newly shined brown dress shoes meet the final resting place of Ms. Perkins. Butterfly buckles and crayons loudly complains about the heat. Bow tie and destruction has acquired a fistful of fake carnations in a particularly lurid shade of yellow, and as the column continues toward the Schneider quadrant of the cemetery, he sprinkles mangled petals on markers and grass alike.

It feels wrong to leave these people in the ground, to shackle them to these plots, to bury them so they can't join the next hunt. Trista swears the grass crunches and shatters around them instead of bends.

She makes sure to give avoid visible mounds.

"Praise be to the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles…"

They've arrived at Mrs. Schneider's final resting place. Mom once again nods along to Father Your-Pal, in tandem with the senior Schneiders. But Trista's watching one of the older great-grandkids twirl between a pair of goliath marble headstones. Pink princess dress covered in cabbage roses, each rotation revealing a glittery tulle petticoat. Face turned up towards the angel statue which holds watch. White ballet flats already stained green at the edges.

"…who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God…"

They're once again standing near the back, so no one notices when she separates herself from the shuddering mass of black and picks her path toward the dancer.

Mom stays put, letting Trista go with a single disapproving sniff.

"… Hi." She feels like her knees aren't sitting right over her ankles.

"Hi." Pink and twirling responds in the abbreviated tone for those below the age of nine.

She pulls at the hem of her sensible black shift dress, "why're you spinning?"

"Gam Gam liked it when I danced."

"She did?"

"Yeah," punctuated by a decisive nod. "She always clapped. Even before I finished."

"…For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comforts abounds through Christ."

She pulls out her phone, fingers tapping through YouTube, as that little girl keeps spinning. Fingertip landing with a decisive nod of her own, kicking off her plain black

flats, she settles on those stain giving blades. Soft melodies floating from tinny iPhone speakers as tulle and pink roses keeps spinning.

Gam Gam liked it best.

“Amen.”

Dismember

Your eardrum vibrating propels you awake. You can feel a little mass of cartilage and tissue migrating down your ear canal, so twist until your face points toward the ceiling, settle there until your internal timpani tilts away from the precipice and slides back into place. A tiny victory, but you can't bring yourself to take advantage of the momentary cooperation of your body. You stay right where you are; only skin cells falling off. That happened even before. With tympanic membrane righted, each alarm clock tic echoes from pinna to cochlea, pinballing from cartilage to tissue and back until each note blurs into white noise. You revel in the stillness as much as possible. Wrapped in cotton sheets, shroud still, you convince yourself there isn't a chasm of air on the mattress beside you, instead of his body.

The faint slap of bare feet on hardwood disturbs, knocking more skin cells off with each echo.

"Mom?" Your daughter. It's always her this time in the morning. The boy has already gone in a whirl of caffeine and coding. Or he's still sitting in front of his computer.

Your left incisor seems to sag into the meat of your tongue. You keep your mouth closed.

"My ride should be here any minute…I'm coming home right after class. I'll see you later. And I love you."

"I love you too."

Tooth be damned.

You almost lose all the skin off your back attempting to peal yourself upright and off the mattress. You have to go to the bank today. Derma tangles with cotton sheets and almost sucks you back in. You have to go to the bank today. You lose a toe nail the second your foot touches the hardwood floor. A trail of blood marks your slow plodding journey across the ten feet between bed and en suite. You have to go to the bank today.

When you pull your night gown off you almost take your ear with it.

It takes minutes to sort through the hygiene debris crowding the bathroom shelves. Your hair clumps with slices of scalp, rivulets of tissue and keratin tangling between shoulder blades. The Dove body wash that claimed to combat the dryness of weakening skin, intimidates your Tresemme for colour-treated hair. You reach for the Dove anyway. You pour a quarter's worth into the palm of your hand and let the steam carry the scent into your nose. Soft, clean, like his shirts before his first cigarette: the dollop slips between digits and fades down down down. Your stomach lining almost clogs the shower drain. Intestines are looped around the new safety bars screwed into the title walls. You grab the Tresemme. Shampoo mixes with stomach acid and body wash, staining nickel hardware yellow. Guts draining and dragging.

You flush stray suds from your eyes. And try to mop up the overflow with towels. Towels already tie-dyed with bile, you stopped putting out fresh ones after the first week.

Your feet are intact this time so there's no blood trail to mark your progress from bathroom to closet. Reaching between his shirts you leave your thumb print on the collar of his cream checked dress shirt. Your hand almost severs at the wrist but you manage to

grab onto your purple fleece sweater just in time. Finding pants so much less treacherous: you don't share a closet.

You stuff your small and large intestine into the waist band of your pants. They're elastic since you always become caught in zippers and buttons now. You have to do this before you put on your socks otherwise you'll trip and molt into the hardwood. You wear two pairs of socks on each foot to strap those rogue toenails in place. You forgot a week ago and left your pinky toenail in the produce aisle of Sobeys right next to the tomatoes.

You go to Food Basic now.

Your knees tremble as you head downstairs. Keeping your left hand on the railing just in case, your other arm wrapped tightly around your stomach, trying to corset your guts to they won't spill out again.

The coffee maker already on. Looks like your son actually left you with a cup this time. Your optic nerve bobs in your morning coffee. The pumpkin blend from that pretentious grocery store in Toronto. The beige mug with a triplicate name hovers on the cutting bored. Silver teaspoon spinning ciliary body round and round and round. Iris breaking the surface on every fourth or fifth rotation. You debate adding the Belgian chocolate toffee creamer. Pros: sweet, something to wash the bitter copper of flaking taste buds out of your mouth. Cons: creamer only for one cup, not prompting an uptick of cheek and a gruff murmur of appreciation at the sweet taste from a rebellious diabetic.

You skip the creamer. Vitreous gel will suffice.

You settle down to watch the news. Your spinal column blocks the cable box receiver. Each vertebrate at precisely the right angle to block the signal from the remote

control. Every attempt to change the channel adds to the increasing web of infrared missed connections lingering in the living room. You're folded on the couch cradling your left arm, head touching ankle, wrapped in that cigarette burnt fleece. If you keep eyes front and centre you can fashion another body from the bits of you scattered on the furniture.

You should vacuum before you go to the bank. You really should. There's a rusty stain by the fireplace, and a chunk of your hair under the side table his ashtray is on. Your skin cells pepper carpet so it looks like snow. The dust mostly comprised of skin cells. You haven't cleaned in a while, so he could still be in there. His cells mixing within yours.

You decide to leave the *Food Network* on. You'll vacuum tomorrow. But not around his spot.

The bank.

Yes, you need to go to the bank. The lawyer's bill came in. You have to go to the bank.

You pull on a hat to keep your ears secure, can't have them impeding your shoulder checks. You pull on a pair of oversized gloves as well. The bank manager glared at you the last time you went in. Must've gotten capillaries tangled in the ATM buttons.

You almost snap your thumb off around the gear shift as you reverse out of the driveway.

The ride is uneventful: the combination of your seat belt, your gloves, the hat, and your fleece sweater manage to keep every part in place.

Your bottom lip slides down to your collar bones, exposes your grimacing teeth as you type in your pin number. 10-9-49. You make a note to buy surgical masks. You extract an alcohol wipe from your purse and wipe the pink tinged spittle from the ATM screen. You also wipe down the buttons just to be safe.

It's four. You have to go home and start dinner.

Your lungs pile in the kitchen sink again. Less chest and more cavity. They dropped into the dirty dishwater when you started to clean the wooden spoon. Now floating, a kindred spirit to errant cauliflower florets and schnitzel gristle. Your lungs take on water, collapsing in failed buoyancy. But you're not drowning yet.

You try to fish them out with salad tongs, before they start to smell too lemony fresh.

The kids will be coming through the door any minute now. You turn to the cabinets and carefully pull out only three dinner plates. Last night, you took out four. So now, your left hand sits in the middle of the kitchen table. The ring finger twitches every so often, creating a shuddering rhythm against the glass bottle of barbeque sauce. Tendons wind around roasted Brussel sprouts and sliced tomatoes.

You pass the platter of chicken legs back and forth. As you question the tenderness of the meat, a soap bubble emerges from your mouth.

The kids assure you that, "it's fine."

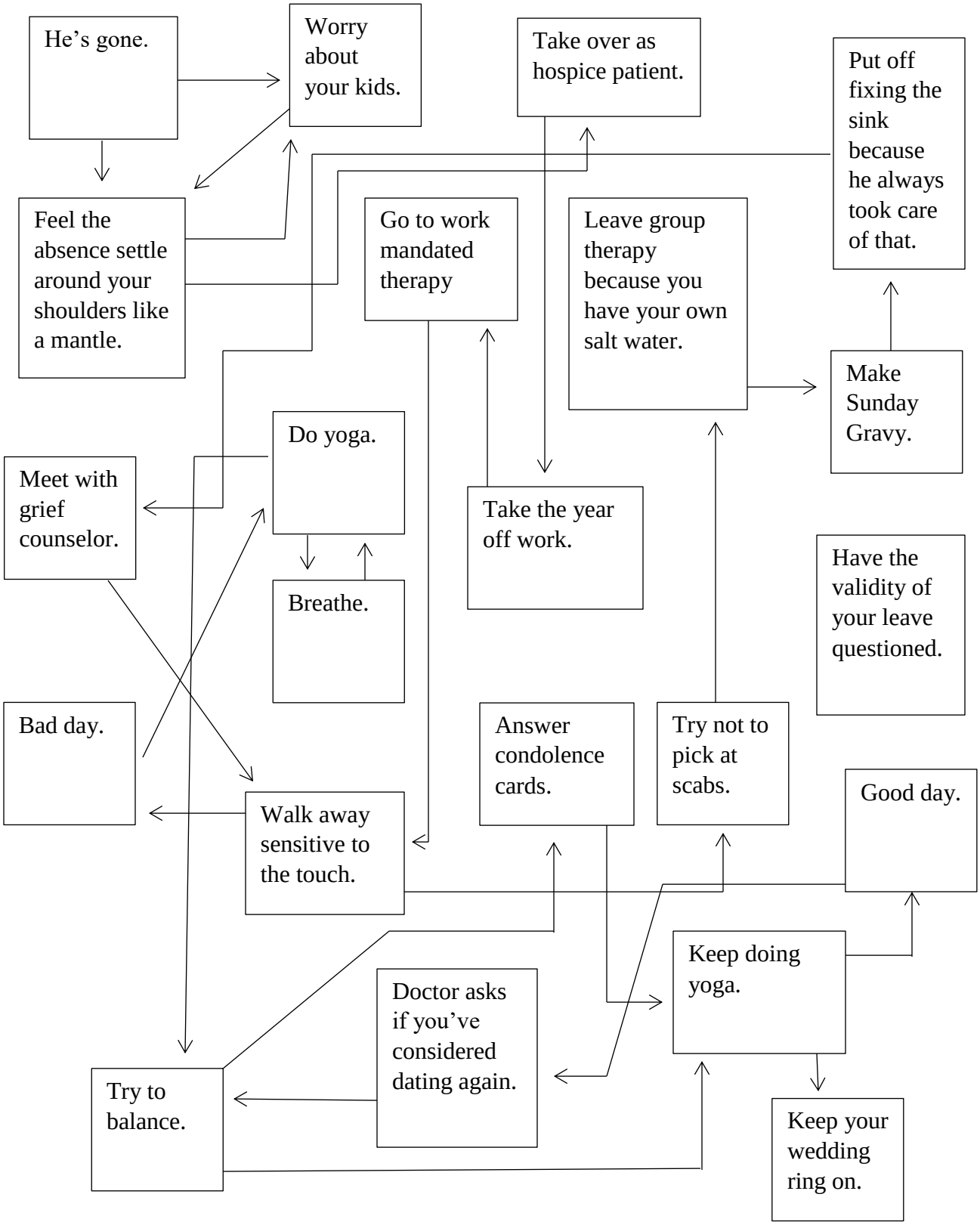
The only sounds after that: knives scraping against plates and forks clanging against bicuspids. Your ear drum shudders in sympathetic rhythm.

Your heart acts as a pie weight. Uncooked shell already inked cherry. Sugar crystals make their way into each ventricle as they're sprinkled over pastry to create the perfect baked crust.

The kids set the table, drooling eager for a slice.

Living Progression through Grief: A Flow Chart

Case I



Hello Promised Land

The Tunnel's the path to the Fillmore, Detroit's Mecca for inquiring minds and aspiring anarchists in too clean high tops and zoot suits. The world weary concrete lacks the romance of the old world cobbled roads Chaucer would favour for his tales, but for her concrete's good enough. Today, she doesn't need whetstone tried daggers or soot covered hands and Latin hymns. She needs lip synch lyric spit and the heat that comes from the press of too many bodies in too little space. She's not twenty-one yet, but September is close to November. To pound the tension away from the two square inches right at the base of her skull: a drum line loud enough to cancel out the pitch of the EKG buried in auditory canal.

This is a pilgrimage because she can't keep breaking down at every health commercial that flickers across her TV screen. And she does break, snapping every time a hospital bed covered in those odd pastel mint sheets that can't be found anywhere else looms into shots real and orchestrated or whenever the "c" word gets uttered in that too-soft too-delicate tone. She's spread so thin she feels like organic cling film. Spread so thin there isn't room for the nausea clamoring at her gut, the iron heavy pulling at her wrists, or the inertia in the arches of her feet that tells her to go. When there's only a hospital gown's thickness between gut and heart there's no room for much at all.

So she's taking the time that the repeating self-help soundtrack echoing between her eyes at elevator music volume says she should. Less than two months from twenty-one. Letting go. She's an age that's painted as very MTV; a remix of Macklemore and Miley, this thrift shop party can't stop and won't stop. Instead she gets socially awkward

wannabe indie rockers who rarely make it out of a basement. Her ear drums might bleed but, she shouldn't be dancing but she is, but she…

Keeps spinning the ring on her right thumb, round and round like a record baby.

Round and round hoping the hangover-like nausea and champagne bubbles will stop.

Round and round: she deserves some dancing. How can she dance on this day, this week, this century?

Hello Promised Land, what will you promise me?

The ring is her grandfather's. Her father's father's. Pressed into her hands before they'd even grown into their life lines. Heavy in her palm: silver and scarred with a diamond, and two lines gouging into the embossed angles. Too big for her ring finger so she wears it on her thumb. Who needs the string of fate on your pinky, when you can anchor duty to your thumb?

Detroit's Mecca the closest thing to her mother's version communion she's had in years.

Bass beats a staccato rhythm behind her sternum and she's got some metal head's neck sweat in her hair (or maybe it's beer, she really hopes it's beer). And she's light. Lighter than she's been in 12 months. Her right hand rises above her head in helium waves. Up and up, as her body jumps and sways to the electric melodies that these Jersey boys call keeping wounds without a bandage. They tell her to get hurt, and she screams

back, “I’m on that train!” She’s all open wounds, but “Bruce Clash-stein” style punk rock, and Detroit destitute smog cauterizes.

The iron heavy ring rolls around the mosh mangled hardwood.

Her helium right hand rises above her head. Again and again.

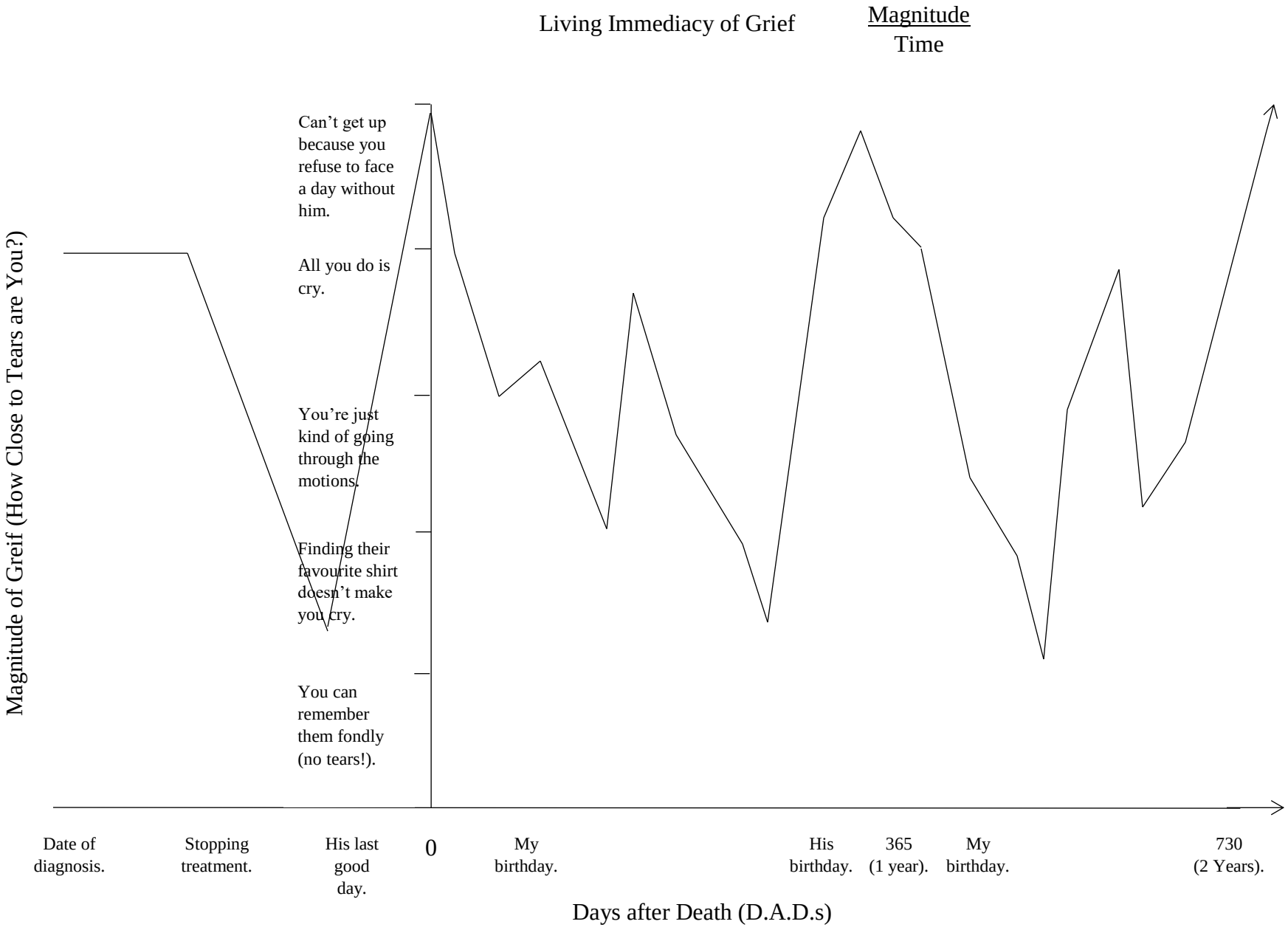
Her thumb so light. And she feels the need for some personal gravity to come back.

Her right hand rises above her head.

Gravitas can wait; twelve months of mornings.

Hello Promised Land.

Her right hand rises.


Living Immediacy of Grief
Magnitude
Time
Magnitude of Greif (How Close to Tears are You?)
Can't get up because you refuse to face a day without him.
All you do is cry.
You're just kind of going through the motions.
Finding their favourite shirt doesn't make you cry.
You can remember them fondly (no tears!).
Date of diagnosis.
Stopping treatment.
His last good day.
0
My birthday.
His birthday.
365 (1 year).
My birthday.
730 (2 Years).
Days after Death (D.A.D.s)

Service Canada

PROTECTED B (when completed)

DECLARATION OF ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY

SECTION A - TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT AFTER THE START OF FIRST DAY OF CLASS

1. Contributor's Social Insurance Number: two weeks past 65	Contributor's Given Name and Initial: Dad Daddy Pops		Family Name: Still his
2. Your Social Insurance Number: 1 of 3	Preferred Language: (X) English ( ) French	Your Given Name and Initial: He named her	Family Name: still ours
3. Your Home Address	Home Address (No., Street, Apt. No.,R.R.): Still in the kitchen		City, Town or Village: Still in his east
	Province or Territory: Still can't really call it hers	Country: Our home	Postal Code: N
4. Mailing Address (If different from home address): N/A	Mailing Address (No., Street, Apt. No., P.O. Box, R.R.)		City, Town or Village
	Province or Territory	Country	Postal Code

5A. Student ID Number: profs didn't know her before

5B. Name of School, University, College, Training Centre, etc.: University of This is What He Wanted Most For Her

6A. Type of Enrollment (if "Evening" or "Other", please provide an explanation in Number 8): (X) Full Time ( ) Evening ( ) Other	**6B.** Number of courses per Term: "Too many." -her advisor	**6C.** Enrolled In (Specify Course, Grade or Program): So proud of his university girl,
7A Number of hours you are required to attend for course, grade or program. Admin? Take a break. Hours per week: Her? 12/7	**7B** When did your current attendance begin? YYYY MM DD: 1 month 2 weeks before	**7C** When will your current attendance end? YYYY MM DD: won't wink when she walks

8. Give duration and reasons for any absence(s) during your current and past academic year plus any additional explanation with reference to question 6A if "Evening" or "Other" was selected.

Academic advisor said that maybe she should take time off. He would always say school comes first. School is her job. Now with paycheck to prove it.

9. Have you applied for or are you receiving a Canada Pension Plan Benefit as a result of the disability or death of a contributor not identified in question 1? ( ) Yes (X) No — Social Insurance Number of that Contributor: Still only have the one father

10. Payment Information

Direct deposit in Canada: Complete the boxes below with your banking information.

Branch Number (5 digits)	Institution Number (3 digits)	Account Number (maximum of 12 digits)
He used to	joke about giving	her a 20 for every A.
Name(s) on the account		**Telephone number of your financial institution**
She'd rather have that joke and		dry chuckle than the 20s.

Direct deposit outside Canada:

For direct deposit outside Canada, please contact us at 1-800-277-9914 from the United States and at 613-957-1954 from all other countries (collect calls accepted). The form and a list of countries where direct deposit service is available can be found at **www.directdeposit.gc.ca**.

Service Canada delivers Employment and Social Development Canada programs and services for the Government of Canada.

SC ISP-1401 (2016-05-24) E — 1 of 2 — Disponible en français — Canada

Social Insurance Number **PROTECTED B (when completed)**

SECTION B - DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I hereby declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information given above is true and complete. I understand to notify Service Canada should I **interrupt** or **terminate** my attendance at school or university. I hereby authorize the above school or university to provide the Canada Pension Plan Administration with information regarding my enrollment and attendance.

↳ vote #2 for no break

The information you provide is collected under the authority of the *Canada Pension Plan* legislation to determine your eligibility for benefits. The Social Insurance Number (SIN) is collected under the authority of section 52 of the *Canada Pension Plan Regulations* and in accordance with Treasury Board Secretariat Directive on the SIN as an authorized user of the SIN. The SIN will be used to ensure an individual's exact identification so that contributory earnings can be correctly posted allowing for benefits and entitlements to be accurately calculated. Because killing off a parent for grade dependant orphan money is better than a part time job.

Submitting this application is voluntary. However, if you refuse to provide your personal information, the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) will be unable to process your application.

↳ because she somehow consented to the whole situation.

The information you provide may be used and/or disclosed for policy analysis, research, and/or evaluation purposes. In order to conduct these activities, various sources of information under the custody and control of ESDC may be linked. However, these additional uses and/or disclosures of your personal information will never result in an administrative decision being made about you (such as a decision on your entitlement to a benefit). → aside from how much money her grades and daughter devotion net her per month.

• how they create the daughter v. dough scale?

The information you provide may be shared within ESDC, with any federal institution, provincial authority or public body created under provincial law with which the Minister of ESDC may have entered into an agreement, and/or with non-governmental third parties for the purpose of administering the *Canada Pension Plan*, other acts of Parliament and federal or provincial law as well as for policy analysis, research and/or evaluation purposes. The information may be shared with the government of other countries in accordance with agreements for the reciprocal administration or operation of that law and of the *Canada Pension Plan*.

Your personal information is administered in accordance with the *Canada Pension Plan* and the *Privacy Act*. You have the right of access to, and to the protection of, your personal information. It will be kept in Personal Information Bank ESDC PPU 146. Instructions for obtaining this information are outlined in the government publication entitled Info Source, which is available at the following Web site address: **www.infosource.gc.ca**. Info Source may also be accessed online at any Service Canada Centre. or your local library

NOTE: If you make a false or misleading statement, you may be subject to an administrative monetary penalty and interest, if any, under the *Canada Pension Plan,* or may be charged with an offence. Any benefits you received or obtained to which there was no entitlement would have to be repaid. she'll stick with emotional distress, thanks.

Signature of Student	Date of Application YYYY MM DD	Telephone Number (including area code)
x Still A Daughter	still too soon	xxx - xxx - xxxx

SECTION C - TO BE COMPLETED BY SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY AFTER THE START OF FIRST DAY OF CLASS

To the best of our knowledge and belief, the answers to the questions in Section A above, are correct unless otherwise stated below:

Additional comments:

Does the above noted course load meet or exceed the minimum requirement to be considered a full-time student at your school or university? ◯ Yes ◯ No

Name and Address of School or University	Name of Authorized Person
	Signature
	Title
	Date / Telephone Number

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Approved pursuant to Section 59 of the Canada Pension Plan for continuing payment until advised otherwise.

Authorized signature **Date**

Service Canada

Service Canada Offices
Canada Pension Plan (CPP) - Declaration of Attendance

B to A = $10 increase?

Mail your forms to:
The nearest Service Canada office listed below.
From outside of Canada: The Service Canada office in the **province where you last resided**.

Need help completing the forms? Yes.
Canada or the United States: **1-800-277-9914**
All other countries: **613-957-1954** (we accept collect calls)
TTY: **1-800-255-4786**
Important: Please have your social insurance number ready when you call.

- Will grades impact payment amount?
- Does this count as a scholarship?
- should official transcripts be sent? every semester?

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Service Canada
PO Box 9430 Station A
St. John's NL A1A 2Y5
CANADA

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Service Canada
PO Box 8000 Station Central
Charlottetown PE C1A 8K1
CANADA

NOVA SCOTIA
Service Canada
PO Box 1687 Station Central
Halifax NS B3J 3J4
CANADA

NEW BRUNSWICK AND QUEBEC
Service Canada
PO Box 250
Fredericton NB E3B 4Z6
CANADA

ONTARIO
If your parent is receiving a CPP Disability benefit
Service Canada
PO Box 2020 Station Main
Chatham ON N7M 6B2
CANADA

- Would having a Fatherly sounding major effect payment?
- English ✓
- Woman's Studies ✓
- Bio?

- will attendance be taken?

ONTARIO
For postal codes beginning with "L, M or N"
Service Canada
PO Box 5100 Station D
Scarborough ON M1R 5C8
CANADA

ONTARIO
For postal codes beginning with "K or P"
Service Canada
PO Box 2013 Station Main
Timmins ON P4N 8C8
CANADA

MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN
Service Canada
PO Box 818 Station Main
Winnipeg MB R3C 2N4
CANADA

ALBERTA / NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT
Service Canada
PO Box 2710 Station Main
Edmonton AB T5J 2G4
CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON
Service Canada
PO Box 1177 Station CSC
Victoria BC V8W 2V2
CANADA

- must photographic evidence of student in lecture be provided? Must professor certify that images have not been photoshopped?

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SC ISP-3501-SCHOOL (2016-05-09) E

will a selfie with prof count?

Canada

Your Husband's Nineteen Other Loves

- Lanterns

  There's a massive brass one next to the stairs, in the alcove below his mother's, your mother-in-law's, cuckoo clock. You have no idea where he found it, but he brought it home one day cradled between calloused palms the same way he'd carry your children when they still demanded apple juice and teeth charms under their pillows to chase away nightmares. "Might've been on a ship during WWI or II or a train during the Great Depression," he crowed while shining away an imagined spot with his shirt sleeve. Either way he kept it polished and puffed up anytime Nina Vito, the organist at the temple, commented, "Oh, it's just magnificent. Like something you'd see in a magazine or at one of those fancy auctions! Such a stately piece, dear. And in such good condition too!"

- Binoculars

  Any kind. From cheap plastic cases he's find at the Dollarama to 12 times optical zoom, with built in LED range finder display special order from Cabela's when Canadian Tire's available stock did not provide the appropriate breadth of bridge widths or technical capabilities. "I want to be able to see individual nostril hairs for at least 100 yards away, Brig!" You and the kids ended up with at least three pairs of binoculars each. He'd give them as stocking stuffers or pass them out as favours at his latest hunting expedition.

- Flashlights

  He put one in each bathroom (3). One in your bedside table (4). Your daughter reveals two in hers (6). He gave her another when she went to Europe for the first time, called it a tactical flashlight and spent twenty minutes explaining all of the features, “See the serrated edge around the lens? That’s if someone gets close and tries to grab you. A couple nasty cuts to the face will scare them off. But we don’t want it to come to that so this button is your first line of defense. It has three settings: your basic steady light, a brighter light, and seizure inducing flash sequence to blind a possible attacker. Don’t roll your eyes at me missy! Better safe than sorry.” (7). Your son claims five to seven in unknown condition in the hunting gear but he won’t show them to you (12-14, condition unknown).

- Knives

  He grew up with knives, your children have grown up with knives (a son with steady hands, and a daughter who doesn’t flinch), and you have only just started learning how to trim silver skin off a pork tenderloin. Each cut slow and miniscule, and according to your son, “too deep, bring the blade closer to the surface; you won’t catch your fingers.” He carried a pocket knife at all times. Another to cut fruit, can’t have packing tape or paper slivers ruining his snack. Both kids have matching ones with hand stitched leather holsters. You keep his on top of the fridge in a ceramic tulip basket. You can’t find any of the hunting knives. They aren’t in any of the side tables, or between the couch cushions, or with the cooking knives, or

in the cabinets in the garage. Your daughter suggests that your son has squirreled them away, probably under his bed, or in his bottom desk drawer, or hidden under his gym gear, or stashed behind the upright freezer downstairs. .

- Coins

  They used to crack against his keys. He'd have a piggy bank worth of change on him at all times; quarter, dimes, loonies, toonies, nickels, always enough for a coffee or three. Those were the everyday coins, but his real pride and joy included silver dollars, commemorative coins; you remember him showing you one that was calcified and black with age; he said with a school boy gleam in his eye, "it's Roman and belonged to my ancestors." He placed it in your hand so softly you almost didn't register the weight of it in your palm; his fingers registered as more. You hold it in your hand now, and try feeling its weight for the first time. Still his fingers on your palm.

- Lighters

  Butane, cheap Bics from gas stations, barbeque lighters with their long necks and trigger handles, a silver Zippo with his father's, your father-in-law's, name engraved on the front. Your daughter has the Zippo now, tucked in her bedside table right next to those flashlights. He had a callous on his thumb from flicking the flint over and over and over, it would scrape against your knuckles whenever he'd pass you the remote so you could watch *The Sopranos* together every Sunday.

- Brass or copper

  Wind chimes, watering cans, flower pots, the bird house in front of the hibiscus flowers you brought back from Hawaii that he spray-painted one summer day, burnt-amber replacing greying wood. The very next summer every home and gardens magazine touted brass and copper as the hot metals, right now.

- Catalogues

  Lee Valley, Cabela's, Canadian Tire, Ikea, and even some battered copies of Sears. He'd sift through page by page, circling and writing notes: need for garage, Trista could use for school, get this for Uly, use to fix creak on third stair from bottom on way to basement. You'd find an ear-marked page with a lurid red circle around a spatula designed to keep flaky fish from breaking when removed for the pan, since you'd complained about the halibut steaks the week before. The last catalogue full of can openers designed to leave no burs on the cut edge and flip the lid out of the way once removed so you wouldn't have to stick your hand into the can. The seven he bought still in the drawer, but when you crank that handle it really slices smoother. You find yourself eating canned tuna and soup five times a week.

- Lee Valley

  Gadgets, gardening, and where he'd find stocking stuffers every Christmas. He'd make the kids, their friends, the mailman guess what the small appliance was for. One year he got rim rollers for Roll Up the Rim

season. The smile on his face as the kids kept throwing out one elaborate theory after the other (a spy camera, a training tool to improve pinch strength, a pedometer, an expandable document clip); closed-mouth, like he held in a laugh with the answer; both would've tumbled if he didn't keep his teeth tight. Near the end (but before you knew it was the end end), you heard that there would be a Lee Valley opening up near the mall. You promised you'd take him. You never got to, but you keep the subscription to the catalogue.

- Fasteners

  Screws and nails by the bucket load. Enough to refasten every baseboard, door frame, and window frame in the entire home, with enough left over to hang and display every picture you ever took of him, ever took of your daughter, son, and their ever shifting friend arcs. You consider. The house might feel less empty with replicas of him and you hanging from every wall.

- Recipes: books, cards, magazines

  Crumpled and worn, with notes and Post Its tacked to the margins. Ripped from America's Test Kitchen and Food Network. But, he never stuck to the recipe. You remember him in the kitchen standing over a pot of Sunday Gravy (rich marinara sauce, with spice, and meatballs and sausage, and short ribs) with a crinkled, stained magazine article. You smooth the article down and peer at the ingredients (basil, oregano, garlic, onions, tomatoes, black pepper) and compare them to the jars spread

across the counter tops. The bases are all covered but he's obviously made some tweaks (more garlic, and chili flakes, and some anchovy paste). He offered you the spoon even though you hate the way wooden spoons splinter across your tongue. You try it. Sunday Gravy becomes Saturday Gravy, and Friday Gravy, and Wednesday Gravy, and Any Day Gravy.

- John Wayne

  The Searchers, *True Grit,* and his every other western. An old-school cowboy. That became the standard gift from the kids. John Wayne DVD after DVD. He had at least two copies of each film, not counting the box sets. So in actuality at least four copies of each of the more well-known films and two copies of the earlier works. But each DVD he treated like a monumental acquisition, the second he pulled it from its wrapping paper. He'd start rattling off production statistic. Even if he'd gotten the same movie the year before, he'd declare, "Just what I needed!" As he'd hook both kids around their necks and into a group hug, depositing bows on the tops of their heads as they drew back. You find empty jewel cases on the shelves, inside a scrap piece of paper with Trista or Ulisse's name and a date.

- War/history

  WWI and II. Ancient Rome also rang loud. He always read with his head half turned back. So aware of what had come before and what will be left after. Your son repeats the same fascination (his history papers in high school got As and remarks from his teachers about his impeccable

research). Your daughter to a lesser extent (she's more obsessed with history as stories). You wonder if it's the blood, if these people of Diana always search for glory long past. You wonder if he found his.

There had to be at least forty different accounts and examinations of the entire progression of WWII. He had 1939 to 1944 covered in paperback and hardcover. Detailed analysis of each front from air, land, and sea. Topographical maps and troop censuses and battlefield photos and microfiche letters. The history books rest against museum catalogues. He said they'd go to Vimy and the beaches and Rome one day. To each museum, and every site. They'd trace the stories together; stand where history was made and leave a bone charm for every man lost so they could be there that day.

- Sweets

  Chocolate and ice cream. You found mini chocolate bars in his shoes: Kit Kats and Aero Bars hidden in loafers and brogues. He'd finish an entire tub of Black Jack Cherry flipping through a garden catalogue. You'd get mad; ask him if he knew what that did to his blood sugar, if he knew what it would do to him. You buy tubs of ice cream for weeks, after. But you take Black Jack Cherry off the grocery list.

- Coffee

  Black, or with just a drop of cream: before the chemo and the hospital beds and the bone charms wrapped to his wrists to ward off the sickness. Coffee that was more cream and sugar than anything else: after when his

skin felt like dry phyllo and his spine couldn't hold him up anymore. You swear you saw him put a scoop of French vanilla ice cream in the mug. When you took the mug to the sink, the liquid swirling in the bottom looked watery beige, white with the slightest tinge of brown. You couldn't even smell the roast.

- Fire pits

  He put a chiminea in the backyard on the patio. When the kids jumped between swimming lessons and soccer games, you'd sit outside after they'd gone to bed. The middle of summer and every time he'd stoke the embers and add broken down clementine boxes to keep the flames going, the sparks would arc like fireflies. You'd sit together basking in the flames. You swear the warmest part of the patio wasn't near the chiminea but near him. Then sickness made him cold. You wish you could've bottled those nights and tucked them like hot water bottles around his sides, since the new electric heater never seemed to keep him warm enough.

- Author: Tom Clancy

  Rainbow 6, *The Hunt for Red October*, he owned the entire Clancy library in paperback. Spies and soldiers up against impossible odds: having to counter bomb threats when you suspect every member of your team is a sleeper agent, infiltrating the enemy base with a paper clip and no shoes. You never got the appeal, but he loved that every protagonist typified caricature of by a strong American jaw and patriotism so potent that his

underwear would most definitely be stars and stripes printed. That Diana boy of yours found comfort in these parodies of heroism. You flip through page one of every novel, but he's not there. He's not there.

- Documentaries: Antiques Roadshow, war journalism, history re-enactments

  PBS used to be the soundtrack to his Saturday naps. Then once he convinced you to get cable (the premium package with HBO and all the channels you could imagine, actually more channels than that, there's a channel all about knitting) PBS still made an appearance but History Channel and HBO thrived. The cinematic interpretations of fire fights (on land, air, or sea) narrated by stern and solemn older British gentlemen became the only sounds that would lull him into slumber beyond the haze of pain medication. You can't fall asleep without the gun fire now, but the splatter of cooking oil seems to be close enough so Food Network will do.

- Locks and keys

  The massive key ring he'd carry. If you somehow missed the door creaking open when he arrived home, you could never miss the clacking of that key ring getting pulled out of the pocket of his chinos. Metal on metal. You buy 12 more wind chimes and hang them in front of the garage door, but the sound doesn't pull up at the corners of your mouth or spark a tingle at your pulse points.

  If he had a ludicrous amount of keys, he had an accompanying number of locks. Colossal rust covered padlocks and tiny TSA approved luggage locks. You scrape at the key holes with tooth picks, gauging the placement

of bolts and pins relative to space for teeth, trying to match them to their keys; but 17 end up without a match. You try not to take it personally.

Thumbs Aren't Made for Talking

His thumbs hover over the touch screen keyboard. Every time the cursor flashes, a sharp pain stabs right in the space between his sternum and the crown of his stomach. A global email would be easiest. Pulsating and urgent. But what does he say?

Ulisse has been letting that cursor savage him for the past twenty minutes.

"Honey?"

Beth places her hand on his knee, the leather of the living room couch crackles as she shifts to reach him comfortably. Her ultra-sweet perfume makes the pain drain down into the pit of his guts.

He'd asked Dad what to get her for her birthday, and Dad answered back, no hesitation, perfume. So that's what Ulisse did. He bought Beth the perfume from the commercial with all the pink and the flowers from that designer label, that even his label-snob of a sister said was "not bad." And he got Trista to wrap it in tissue and glitter with a bow that coordinated with the bottle because Dad had said, "don't just hand her the thing, wrap it so Beth feels special." She'd shrieked a little when she opened the package, after carefully untying the bow, rejecting his pocket knife when he offered. The smell (a florist on steroids, mixed with almost-burnt sugar) registers as the way she'd cupped the bottle in her hand with the glitter peppered on her finger tips.

"I'm just…" He gestures between his phone and his throat. An empathic wiggle to encompass all the ways in which his tongue fails him. The synapses not firing right between his brain, his tongue, his thumbs, and the mass of razor-coated loss. Ulisse can't seem to translate his body's rebellions into words; no emoji to communicate that his father really truly died, no hashtag to encompass the lack he's now expected to live with.

But people have to know and he has to be the one to tell them. He has to do this: his father would do this.

Beth catches his hand as his wrist continues to flex the phone. Unwrapping his fingers; fingers pressing hard enough to the screen to leave a mirror of whitened pressure on flesh and pixels. Unwrapping them with the same deliberate delicacy as that glitter bow, she holds the freed phone just like she held that perfume bottle.

"Let me take care of this," she places her other hand where the phone used to be and Ulisse lets his fingerprints search hers for the grit of glitter.

Ulisse saws into his steak, each stroke properly against the grain. The resulting slices swirled through just to keep them at the optimum level of moist, then he places each slice into his awaiting mouth where he chews until he's demolished the pepper crust.

"Ulisse, Trista… there's something I'd like to speak to the two of you about."

Trista places her fork on her napkin and mimics Mom's pose. Back straight, shoulders parallel to the table top and perfectly within the border of the placemat, chin tilted down by at least fifteen degrees so when they blink it looks like they're trying to discern the meaning behind the configuration of peas and green beans on their respective plates, hands resting so fingers cover knuckles.

Ulisse starts alternating bites of green bean with peas after every second bite of steak.

"I've decided to see a grief counselor. At Hospice."

He shoves two bites of steak into his mouth. Molars and incisors working at what he thinks might be a bit of stubborn connective tissue. He keeps working at it and working at it and working at it. Tearing and mashing until his mouth cradles a soft paste. He swallows it down, past the barbs clinging to his tonsils.

"I think it would be best for me."

Ulisse starts sorting the last of the peas by size and general shape. Large peas to the right. Medium peas to the centre. Small peas to the left. Large and spherical rolled toward the upper right quadrant of the dinner plate. Large and oval-esque to the central right. Large and other to the lower right.

"I need to talk to someone."

Medium/spherical: upper centre. Medium/oval-esque: central center. Medium/other: lower centre.

"We'll support you, no matter what Mom." Trista murmurs, mirroring in tone and volume. It's the same range they use during prayer. Syllables meant to sooth and bind and bless. Soft and muted, like if they speak too directly their words will crystalize on the open air and shatter around them leaving wounds in their wake.

Ulisse nods along. Small/spherical: upper left. Small/oval-esque: central left. Small/other: lower left.

"He gave me his card and said that if either of you needed to talk he'd be willing."

There are no more peas.

"…We'll think about it." Some of Trista's winter is coming back, portcullis inching shut. He can feel her eyes drilling into his forehead. Like knuckles rapping on a doorframe. He won't answer the door.

Peas and green beans and steak clinging to his esophagus. Mixing with the syllables that got caught between grey matter and tongue and thumbs. Building pressure behind the tonsils.

"Ok, I just wanted to let the two of you know so you have the option. Because you never know you may feel—"

Consonants and vowels mixing and slipping. Knocking at the backs of his front teeth and burrowing under palette. But he and you and we gone what you can do he miss ur se placet gone could now gon no fer us—

"No"

"That's ok, but you may change your mind—"

"No."

—don't know how to say. Everything is sticking between thumb and tongue and mind and he's gone and it's just the shape of a man left when Ulisse expects plaid flannel button downs and blankets of cigarette smoke and heavy hands teaching him how to hold a bow. How to explain the lack of plaid and smoke and guiding bows?

No.

Keep it to himself.

"Good to see you man. We saw the Facebook posts. You haven't been out in a while, since… you know."

An empathetic wiggle. A swirling motion that starts at the wrist, fingers held stiff and aloft. Like cows sucked into a twister, shocked and unsure of why exactly the ground isn't solid beneath their feet.

Even his friends don't know how to say it.

It's Friday. Ulisse is at the temple for post-hunt drinks with the boys. He'd found a rhythm in the twhoork of arrows released, the constant shouts of "My grandmother can shoot better than that and she's ash!" and the snap of brush beneath five pairs of camo hiking boots. Rhythm that felt like hands steadying his grip, and a gentle prod from a booted foot to adjust his stance. Covered in sweat, splattered in mud, picking blood and down from his cuticles, Ulisse had been one with the hunt. Till… "you know."

The rest of the boys, spread around the table. Each with their heads down, shoulders making nice with the fleshy lobe of their ears. All peering at him past furrowed brows, "Yeah, it has been a while, since… you know."

"Yeah…" They bobble their agreement. "…How're you doing?" Noses dip into drinks, fingers fiddle with pocket knives and cuffs. An abrasive but persistent cough emerges from the right.

"Fine."

"Okay…yeah… that's good. Yeah, real good." They bobble again, sending waves of agreement his way. "So… did anyone else see Vinny trip?"

"Hey."

Ulisse has melted into the couch. The seat of his grey jogging pants fused to the brown/orange/beige velour/suede/velvet wagon and floral printed couch cushions. Thumbs mashing trigger/A/B/X buttons as speakers sputter with the sounds of gunfire and all-terrain tires popping. Guts, and mouth, and head, and hands settled into a tentative truce.

"Left! Left!"

"Do you think we could grab coffee or something this week?"

"Follow me! C'mon you're catching aggro!"

"We just haven't really talked about…"

"Left! Left! Look at the map!"

"And I think I'd be good for us to talk, yaknow?"

"The objective is right there! No! Right! There!"

"Since no one knows how this feels more than we do."

"Boom! Headshot! Look at that kill streak boys!"

"Like he's our dad… was our dad. No, is our dad."

"You're killing me here!"

"So, coffee… later this week?"

"C'mon boys!! It's like you're not even listening to me!"

"… I'll try you when you're not busy, then."

Trista: Hey, we're getting coffee on Saturday.

Ulisse: What?

Trista: Coffee. Saturday. Us. Talking.

Ulisse: Since when?

Trista: Since yesterday.

Ulisse: I can't

Trista: Too bad. I've already told mom.

Ulisse: I'm going out with Beth

Trista: See you Saturday at 3.

Delilah's. Don't be late.

“You look like you’ve just snapped a bow string or one of the new pointer hounds peed on your boots,” Beth chuckles from his right.

“Trista.”

“Ah, what has persnickety little sister done now?”

“We’re apparently getting coffee Saturday.” Ulisse nods toward the screen of his cell, still shining Trista’s texts like beacons of disapproval. She’s knocking at him again. Digits to batter at his frames. “She wants to *talk*.”

“Ah,” Beth nods, a wrinkle between her brows and around her nostrils. “You know it might not be a bad idea. Like it’ll give us a chance to touch base and discuss how everyone’s doing. I can ask her if she wants to add anything to the memorial page.”

Ulisse spins his cell on the wooden coffee table top. Blurring the texts until they’re nothing but bars of coloured haze. Pressing his thumb down on one of the corners, the phone stutters to a stop. “Memorial page?”

“Yes. I told you I’d take care of things,” Beth clicks her tongue, flipping her hair over her shoulder. Is it a braid? But it doesn’t look like a braid, it’s all reversed. Ulisse can braid. He made bone charms with the aunties until he was twelve. Plaiting thin coloured strips of leather, weaving them around fangs and tibia. He knows what a braid looks like. Fishtail? Is that what Trista called the weird reverse braid-not-braids? Did Beth mention that this morning when she was running late? “I should’ve mentioned the page to her sooner. She’s an English major! Probably would’ve been able to write the posts much better than I did. I’ll ask her if she wants to help.”

“Yeah…” Ulisse chews at his thumb nail, each chomp trying to push back the bubbles of bile climbing up his esophagus and knocking at his uvula.

Twelve traffic lights between home and the café Trista has chosen. Ulisse knows because he looked up the optimal root on Google maps during his lunch break on Friday. Twelve traffic lights—fourteen if you count the stop signs that bracket the most efficient route out of their neighbourhood and onto the main streets, and a stop sign and a traffic light essentially serve the same function so… Fourteen possible full stops. He searches the average time it takes for a red light to turn over; he can't find an empirical measure, but one Yahoo Answers contributor estimates an average of a minute thirty to two minutes. So a possible addition of approximately eighteen to twenty-four minutes to travel time. Meaning if he wants to ensure prompt arrival he should leave at 2:20pm at least.

Ulisse leaves at 2:45pm.

The notification for Beth's reminder text to pick her up shares screen space with *thriftiemummy5438*'s assurance that red lights will last for at least two minutes. A chime cuts into the still air of the car, most likely Trista. Probably a text telling him where she's sitting so he can find immediately. Knowing her, she'll have found large leather arm chairs, hers facing the entrance and framed by some sort of artwork so she can stare you down as you make your way over to her.

That's what he finds.

As he and Beth cross the threshold into Delilah's (at 3:05pm), the pointed ring of the doorbell marks Trista's face slipping from bemused smirk to icy façade. Arched eyebrow and chin tipped up to an eighty-five degree angle so even sitting in a beaten up armchair she peers down her nose. Makes her look like the aunties at temple. He resists

the urge to check his boots for mud or tap at his neck to make sure his amulet sits centred and that the chain isn't tangled.

"Oh! There's Trista!" Beth issues a bubbly wave that Trista doesn't return. "I'm going to get us some drinks, go sit down. Americano, right?" She busses a kiss against his cheek, scrunching her nose a bit when her lip gloss catches in the edge of his beard.

Ulisse mumbles an indistinct agreement. Walking toward Trista, he feels every inch the rabbit he'd call her ex. Twitching under her talon-sharp gaze, even his toes vibrate a nervous stutter in his boots (the pair not crusted in mud, he doesn't need Trista and Beth engaging in one of their rare yet terrifying team ups). No wonder she and Ryan crashed and burned, if this is how she'd look at him.

"Uly." Trista takes a sip from her cup, her other hand gesturing from him to take the chair across from her. "So…glad Beth could join us."

"You did invite us." The leather cushion gives a soft puff of air as he settles down.

"…I guess I did, didn't I?" She sips from her cup again. "How's work been?"

"Busy. Stressful."

"Manager giving you shit again?"

"Same old, same old."

"How was she about… everything?"

Tongue heavy. But a little easier: synapses to heart to tongue, but not thumbs. Not as far to travel now. The distance seems traversable. "Well, things w—"

"They didn't have the low cal sweetener you like, but they did have raw sugar so I added a packet of that." Beth bustles over, two mammoth white mugs in her pink-tipped

hands. One topped with whipped cream and chocolate shavings, the other his Americano. As Beth places both cups on the side table between their chairs and takes her own seat, Trista squares her shoulders and retreats from her attentive lean forward. Pressing her spine into the armchair's back, Trista cups her mug at sternum level. Her middle finger tapping out a disparate rhythm on the glazed white china.

"Hi Beth, you made it."

"Hey sis!" Beth issues a sunny smile. Her smile the first thing Ulisse noticed about her. Lopsided, not in a bad way, not at all. But her upper lip on the left side ticks up just a bit higher than on the right, so you see a peak of gums. Why he calls her Gummy Bear when they're alone.

Trista's left eye twitches.

"I think this was just such a good idea, Trista. I mean we really need to be here for each other. After all, loss is just so overwhelming, you know? Like just the other day, I was out for lunch with Rachel." Beth twists toward Ulisse, and pats him on the knee. A quick one-two rap right on the knee cap. "You remember Rachel don't you?" She then twists back to Trista. "Rachel's one of my sorority sisters. We pledged together and just became thick as sieves. So Rachel and I were getting lunch and we went to that little bistro on Main, you know the one right next to that cute little flower shop? So we were sitting down looking at the menu, and our server comes over and you would not believe who it was!" Beth pauses gaze darting between Trista and Ulisse, waiting for one of them to tap into the conversation.

Trista arches her eyebrow at Ulisse and takes a pointed sip of her drink. A waft of cinnamon follows the motion.

"Who?" Ulisse mutters. His own drink, untouched on the side table, letting off a steady haze of steam. He doesn't think his stomach is up to any new additions.

"Carol!" Beth punctuates the statement with an expressive swing of both arms, like a magician revealing the dazzling climax of an astounding trick. Her head swivelling between the siblings, in pert anticipation.

Ulisse and Trista shrug at each other. Who the hell is Carol? Puzzlement implicit in the tensed set of Trista's shoulders. Ulisse fiddles with the hairs of his beard on the tip of his chin, as if rearranging the scruff will push the knowledge to the forefront of his mind and onto his tongue.

"Come on, you guys! Carol! She used to work at the diner on Fourth!"

The diner on Fourth? The diner on Fourth.

"Ok so that'll be important later. But as I was saying, Rachel and I were ordering. She's on this new gluten-free diet to try and lose weight so I started telling her about how we've gone paleo…"

The diner on Fourth. Sal's. She means Sal's. With the Happy Days checkerboard tile floor and the permanent grease stains on the beige Formica table tops. And "the best pastrami sandwiches in this Diana-blessed town!" Ulisse can practically smell the grease/coffee/tomato sauce/mustard/powdered sugar/onion smell that permeated the place. He remembers Carol now too. Kindly triangular woman. Hair more red than grey. Always a pencil behind her ear, and the smell of jasmine about her. Her husband once a baker at the Lebanese place the street over, so she'd bring them baklava. Always an extra piece for Dad. He'd take it with a wink and promptly stuff it in his mouth before Mom could scold him about his sugar.

"… and then Carol told me that Sal's closed! I couldn't believe it since I swear we'd just been there with…"

They hadn't. The last time they'd been to Sal's, like really been to Sal's was pre… "you know." Trista slapped a pound of ketchup onto her fries. Mom nibbled at some salad or other, probably the one with pumpkin seeds or maybe the one with poppy seeds? Something about seeds. Ulisse got the house burger (BBQ sauce, onion rings, cheddar cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and two all-beef patties on a dark rye bun). And Dad…Dad got the pastrami sandwich. He gave Trista the pickle skewered to the top like always. He'd grilled Ulisse about Beth. "Why's my little boy suddenly washing his truck every week, making sure those floor mats aren't caked with mud." He'd wink at Mom as he said it. Mom said she wasn't going to complain about any new standard of cleanliness from their son. Carol refilled Dad and Mom's coffees, and chuckled as Ulisse makes unflinching eye contact with the Elvis poster near the door to the men's washroom. Trista, typical younger sibling, did her best to make him lose that cool: providing a last name, appearance, and basic social dossier for Beth. Ulisse attempted to suffocate himself in his hoodie, and Dad ordered an extra serving of fries for Trista. Dad offered Trista twenty bucks a month to keep an eye on Beth, Trista said she'd do it for no less than fifty. As the two playfully haggled, Mom reached out for Ulisse's hand and told the two hooligans to cease and desist immediately, or forfeit their dinner.

That had been one of the last good days.

Beth and Ulisse never actually went to Sal's. Not like she seems to think. Once, when Beth trailed Ulisse to the hospital, Dad kept going on about "the best pastrami sandwiches in this Diana-blessed town!" He couldn't remember the name, Sal's, or that

he used to take extended lunch breaks, when Ulisse and Trista were in grade school and had PA or PD days, and bring them to Sal's for sandwiches and root beer floats. But he remembered those sandwiches. Kept going on about how they always managed to toast the rye just perfectly so it was evenly tan and that the short-order cooks stacked the lunch meat at least "two inches tall, Uly!" and they always put the mustard on the meat instead of on the bread. So when the nurses took Dad for another test, Ulisse grabbed Beth, drove to Sal's and got one of those sandwiches to go.

He doesn't remember who served them, it might've been Carol, but he remembers Dad tucking into that sandwich. Cheeks chipmunked and a smear of mustard right where the patch of grey in his beard used to be.

Then he wedged the wrapper into a gap in his bed that the night nurses never really inspected. The wrapper still scrunched in there, after.

"… so Carol asked after Dad and oh! I almost started crying right there!"

Ulisse wonders if Trista remembers those afternoons throwing straw wrappers at each other as Dad kept score. If she remembers them trying coffee for the first time, and her spitting it out onto Dad's cream coloured dress shirt. He chances a glance in her direction and finds Trista looking right back, white mug trembling in her hand, and a little sad twist of a smile.

"…I told her what happened to Dad. And oh, she was just so sorry! Comped our dessert and she asked after everyone. I told her we're all hanging on, but it sure gets tough because we all miss him so much. She asked if there was any way she could send flowers or leave condolences, so I told her about the Facebook page. And she said she'd leave a message soon about her favourite customer!"

Both Ulisse and Trista freeze rabbit still.

"Facebook page?" Trista's voice trembles. Ulisse pictures lines and lines of text, all repeating: he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone. Over and over. He's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone. Comment after comment, asking why. Asking how. Posts describing that Dad couldn't even recognize them and that the family had to share a room with another patient who complained to the nurses that they were being too loud. Posts anyone can find. Their grief on display. And none of it came from him. "You said it was a memorial page…" Ulisse trails off, unsure if he wants to know the specifics. None of it came from him.

"Babe, it's a memorial Facebook page. You were having such a hard time contacting people, I just thought…" Beth looks uncertain for the first time since they sat down, since the first time they met. She wraps her fingers around his bicep, issuing small squeezes in time with Ulisse's unsteady exhales.

"How fucking dare you." Arrow fast and glacial, Trista slams her mug onto her side table. "You have no right!"

"Trista, I'm trying to help—"

"He's not. Your. Father! He's ours!" And then quieter: "He was ours."

"I know that, I was just—"

"Just what? Using our father to get your lunch comped? Getting a sick little thrill from strangers fawning over you?"

"No, not at all! I would never—"

"Trista! Beth would never—"

“But she did! She never asked us! We’re his family! Not *her*!” Trista takes a shuddering breath, “he would’ve never wanted his passing slid onto a google search.”

“Trista…” Ulisse starts. Now he’s the one holding onto Beth, his arm around her shoulder, his hand rubbing softly at her upper arm. Trying to stay steady even if the distance it would take to press a comforting kiss to her crown feels too far.

“No, Uly. You can’t argue that. He never would’ve wanted to be some… spectre, a sad story on the internet for people to throw false condolences at!”

Beth sniffles, “I’m sorry, I just wanted to help…”

If Trista was anyone else, she’d back off, feel a little something for her brother’s cheerful girl guide, just trying to do her best. Instead, his sister straightens her spine and uses the nail of her right index finger to flick away any tear that manages to escape. “… Sure. Sure you were.” Trista doesn’t say she forgives Beth, and Ulisse doesn’t think his wrathful little sister ever will.

“Has Mom seen it?” Trista’s question comes out cool, but no longer crackling. Ulisse’s hands involuntarily tighten and he can feel Beth flinch as his nails dig in.

“No, she hasn’t.” Beth responds, head bowed. Her nails pick at her tights.

“Good.”

Thank Diana.

“It needs to come down. Screenshot anything you want to save, but you’re taking it down. Tonight.”

Beth nods, “I’m sorry.” She tucks her face into Ulisse’s chest and whispers sorry once more.

“Okay.”

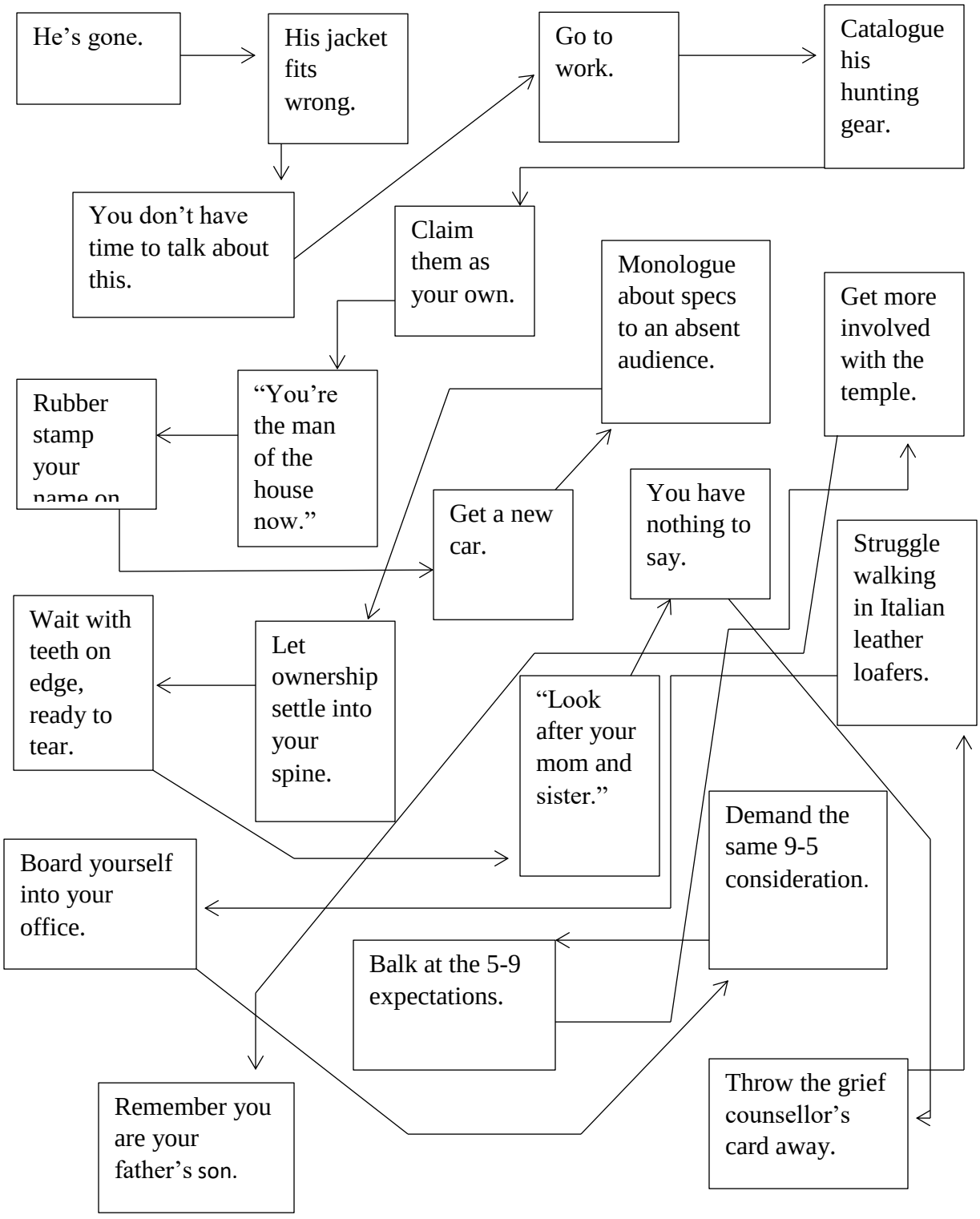
Ulisse still feels the words clogged from synapse to thumbs, but his throat agrees with Trista. It needs to come down. He kisses his girlfriend on her crown, inhaling her fruity floral scent. Tulips, maybe. Or wilting peonies.

It has to come down because it’s not their words.

Not his words.

Living Progression through Grief: A Flow Chart

Case II



Dictionary for the Dying: A Guide to Corporeal Linguistics

accept: learning to like love live the taste of ashes, taking charcoal onto the tongue and not spitting it back up, swallow.

analepsis: memory loss, the drink-me-Alice, Swiss cheese.

anger: 2 am tossing, incisors like matches, smearing ashes on the couch where he sits will sit did sit, throwing strawberry ice cream at the ceiling, leaking 'I'm sorry' 'don't eat that' 'can't you see you're just speeding up the process' 'why don't you fight anymore' 'why are you gone', covering top to tip in war paint and finding the battlefield empty.

blanket: smother mother other, wrapping limbs in layer after layer because the flame is going out, trying to defrost icicle fingers but he can't do much when sub-zero is administered intravenously, regularly, for when the ill brings chill.

bone: concrete egg shell, crash helmet tortoise, here to as stonewall organic fortress but it's gone Trojan and Achilles is on holiday.

boss: an attempt to be friendly, what the paramedics call him like he's the one in control here, like he can order cancer cells to cease and desist.

buggerstick: cane, a third leg to keep him upright, keep him at a six-foot stature instead of three feet closer to the ground, capability glad rags, barometer of health (don't); (see walker, wheelchair.)

car: move from here to there, from here to there, from there to here, hospital home hospital home hospital home, he was supposed to teach me how to drive, how to master axels and parallel parking but the driver's seat considers him persona non grata, shotgun where he sits every morning eyes shut tight, driving bye.

casket: box, he loved boxes, hidey holes for pack rat treasures, first hidey hole that's not just his but ours, where we will lay him, latest in a line of boxes holding precious cargo.

chemo: miracle that fails, Hollywood deus ex machina that forces hair out through fits of gravity, pulling down where it should lift, September to February poison.

cherry: cheesecake, pie filling, ingest to make cheery, intake directly proportional to glucose and serotonin levels (see ice cream).

cigar boxes: hidey holes #26-93, resting places for buttons, nails, wire, paper, and his high school grad portraits; we twitch our lips and squint into a camera lens.

cigarettes: highest order distraction, new communion, way to suck health back into his lungs one smoke curl at a time, started as a teen counting days in nicotine stained butts so there's no reason to stop counting now even if it's counting down, way to make one with the ash since he knows what's coming but we haven't caught on quite yet.

comfortable: for him—cigarette in hand on his corner of the couch wrapped in that burn ridden fleece blanket watching westerns with the volume way up with a tub of black jack cherry skewered via spoon soup, for us—reset the tape about three years back.

CPP: Canadian Pension Plan, how the government informs me I'm an orphan.

cure: a Victorian curiosity, will get worse before it gets better; right now it's stuck on the worse and dropping into worst, waiting for the upswing to come that never does, Godot in medicine.

curls: falling down and falling out, there's been a break up between him and his hair, made the transition from locks to strands to wisps until clippers buzzed away and scalp took centre stage.

decadron: the helium to your balloon, marshmallow man

denial: the push that says one more round of treatment can't hurt, even though he looks more grey than any other colour, white coats insist there's still a chance, do we see some pink coming back into his edges? and those breaths tinged with frost, sitting on glacial concrete in the twilight of October? swearing she can feel the pulse of an electric heater and a huff and puff, still expecting a gruff 'pepina' in the morning.

dignity: what he must preserve, at all costs. can't sleep, he wants to stay at home, done with the hospitals and assless gowns, so goddamn tired, can't rest in the name of no more poking or prodding, needles outlawed and kopi luwak in its place, but the question, can't bathe himself or make his own meals or remember what day it is or which language he's supposed to be speaking, what about her dignity, in the middle of the night she peers downstairs at the hospital bed to make sure he's still breathing, how is he supposed to live, how is she supposed to live when he can't.

dura: inner bailey, membrane that's been bubble-gum popped.

eulogy: quick synopsis, the Spark Notes version of the *Iliad* vs the *Iliad*, the movie adaptation of the book when everyone knows that the book is better, the highlight reel, the workout montage from Rocky without the rest of Rocky, the prologue from Romeo and Juliet.

father: getting further, pops, Frankie Baby, what I'm going to miss, what I'm missing, a fourth of this family, who used to hold her hand during the scary parts of The Temple of Doom and brush her hair for a half hour every night, whose hand she holds while he breathes through 4 minutes to sit up from that damned chair and as the heart monitor cries out in the end, whose hand she's missing when she crosses that stage to claim that empty folder holding four years of essays and exams that put BA on her resume, when she manages to unclog a toilet on her own for the first time, when she finally masters parallel parking, when she figures out how to cook a steak at medium rare, when she gets her first big girl job and she hates her boss but loves her work and calls home every week to hear him tell her that she's too good for that place even though we both know that what I have to learn far outweighs what I know, when Harrison Ford has another mishap landing his plane, when some stupid boy really breaks my heart instead of the other way around and makes me question the 'you'll dance through anything' and the 'your lion heart is generous' that he whispered in the space between fingers.

fleece: polar to be exact, to ballast against the chill (see: blanket).

flannel: armour, almost a family crest if we bought into that sort of thing, what he'll be wearing 9 times out of 10, one of the wrapping layers but this one is inherited, there's a plaid hanging in her closet that belonged to his father, and then to him. She hugs it to her chest at night and swears it's still warm.

flush: to cleanse, wash away, cast out into the great wide yonder because the path is blocked and it shouldn't be, but maybe the fact that the path isn't clear is telling us that this needs to stop (see: port).

foot: tricky with just one, need the two, but he can't seem to find his footing, the entreaty to massage how he teased me from ages 6-20, wish she'd given in just once because she knows that smile would've put every bracelet or necklace he bought her to shame.

funeral: send off, a ceremony he never wanted, was never big on pomp and Pompeii circuses, but this pomegranate might just be the sort that requires a little pomp, maybe not for him since he'll be there but he won't, but how we say good bye to a man and a version of us, a quarter of us, a shift from "us" to "us."

garage: lion's den, sick bed, the last piece of 'him' he has, the Promised Land.

gone: halfway to, maybe it would be easier.

goodbye: the thing we're rehearsing to say, the thing he's saying with every repetition of that tired old foot massage joke, the thing we weren't ready to say but had to, the thing we aren't sure we said right.

grief: about 200 pounds that settle in my ribcage and presses down to the balls of the feet, and leadens every step and breath, a grey haze shrouding out the light, having to re-learn English because her tongue can't wrap properly around syllables, flinching every time "father" is mentioned in a sentence, develop spontaneous esophageal spasms when my friends complain that their parents are "too involved" and "controlling," boycott her backyard, spend days at a time watching Kitchen Nightmares reruns with her phone hidden at the back of her closet, consider tattooing "I'm fine" on her forehead so people will stop asking if she is or isn't (it's a lie but having to share another piece of him with the woman at

Registrars who signs the CPP forms sends her right back to Kitchen Nightmares), wear black unironically, refuses to cut her hair for a year.

hydromorphone: opioid magic carpet, the eat-me-Alice.

hyper vigilance: hair trigger anything, waiting for the silence that comes after a flatline that she can feel building, because all the signs are right there in the ratio between days in hospital versus days out.

ice cream: cherry, chocolate, only French vanilla not the generic shit, eaten by the tub not the bowl, ingest, intake directly proportional to glucose and serotonin levels (see: cherry).

impulsive: do what he wants when he wants, eat an entire tub of rocky road with a nicotine chaser at 3am when he knows that the squeak of the hinges wakes mom up every time, dancing smoke, sugar and static, smokestack highs and insulin spikes, bull headed, pig headed, the animal kingdom converges in him, Kipling would've thought twice about Mowgli if he knew, instinct, jump.

insomnia: beneath his skin like a battery, keep going and going and going and going and going and going and going, until.

journey: path they're walking or at least trying to, since there comes a point when no matter how bad they wish they could follow him, the road less travelled isn't theirs to tread (not yet, not yet), he's got to hobble the rest on his own.

last days: try weeks, try months, try years, the timeline bullshit just another waiting game with a shitty door prize: eyelids paralyzed open, or a twitch in your neck, or that humming noise every woman over 35 makes when they look at her because they somehow just know.

La-Z-Boy: him on all days that end in ‘y’, only place he seems to be able to sleep lately.

lighter: click flick, burst, octane prelude to nicotine high, flicker burst, burn (see: cigarette).

milligrams: (ten) the measure of his (their) days, hour to hour, the magic number, when she’s allergic to math.

morning: was—quick coffee scented kiss on the cheek as he whirled out the door, jobsite ready, now—bundling him tight and strapping him into leather car seat, while we rush in seven different directions that he can’t follow.

morphine: drip, drop, cotton batting, opiate daze that Coleridge could appreciate.

mourning: the song and dance, how to foxtrot while crying, getting ready for the stage, trying to figure out how one plays the archetype of ‘widow’ or ‘orphan’.

neurosurgery: miracle cure #1-3, doctors ripped him up and stitched him back with chunks of what makes him him missing: wit reduced to third grade humour, will sit in the garden but won’t attempt to baby his tomatoes, and now they’re to deal with him not remembering more than a couple hours in either direction, not remembering he quit smoking.

obituary: a CV/resume for the recently passed, a person bullet pointed, wonder if St. Peter takes a look before he cranks the pearly gates, wonder if Diana skims it before she lets him on the hunt.

osteosarcoma: the thing that’s disconnecting all the synapses that make point A to B this winding detour of a thing that his own flesh and blood can’t follow, a foreign invader in his inner sanctum, winning grey matter territory by the minute, what doctors and counsellors and the woman at the convenience store who sells lottery

tickets tell us to blame, what they're living with, him but not him, maybe just what's left.

pill caddy: way to measure days or weeks, separated by am and pm, taking it 6 prescriptions at a time, Sunday to Saturday, breakfast to bed.

pine: box, simple unobtrusive, the most he'd allow, dressed it up with a fleece blanket so mom could stand him in it.

port: valve stabbed into the chest, medicinal avenue, keeps getting clogged, but apparently they can't take the hint.

radiation: the carrot in the wings, perfection that just won't be, the newest miracle maybe.

sirens: one more narrative expectation.

skull: outer bailey with attached moat (see: bone).

smoke: ephemeral bracket to the whole story, signal fire that told us he could still huff and puff away, what he went up in in that damned pine box, prelude to ashes.

space heater: portable embers, huddle up and around, try to leech the flame into bones and cells that are hollowing out and ready to migrate south.

stay: the opposite of leaving, need you to, but trying might just kill us too.

sugar: another item on the list of don't but you do's (see: cherry; ice cream).

toque: most of body heat escapes through the top of the head, trying to keep a lid on it, favoured visual symbol of the 'c' word.

wait: hurry up and do that, get where we have to go and then take a second or a minute or ten or an hour even though the appointment was marked urgent, stew in brochures

and tick tock while receptionists gossip about irl McDreamy and Meredith, leave a hour's worth of sand on the waiting room floor.

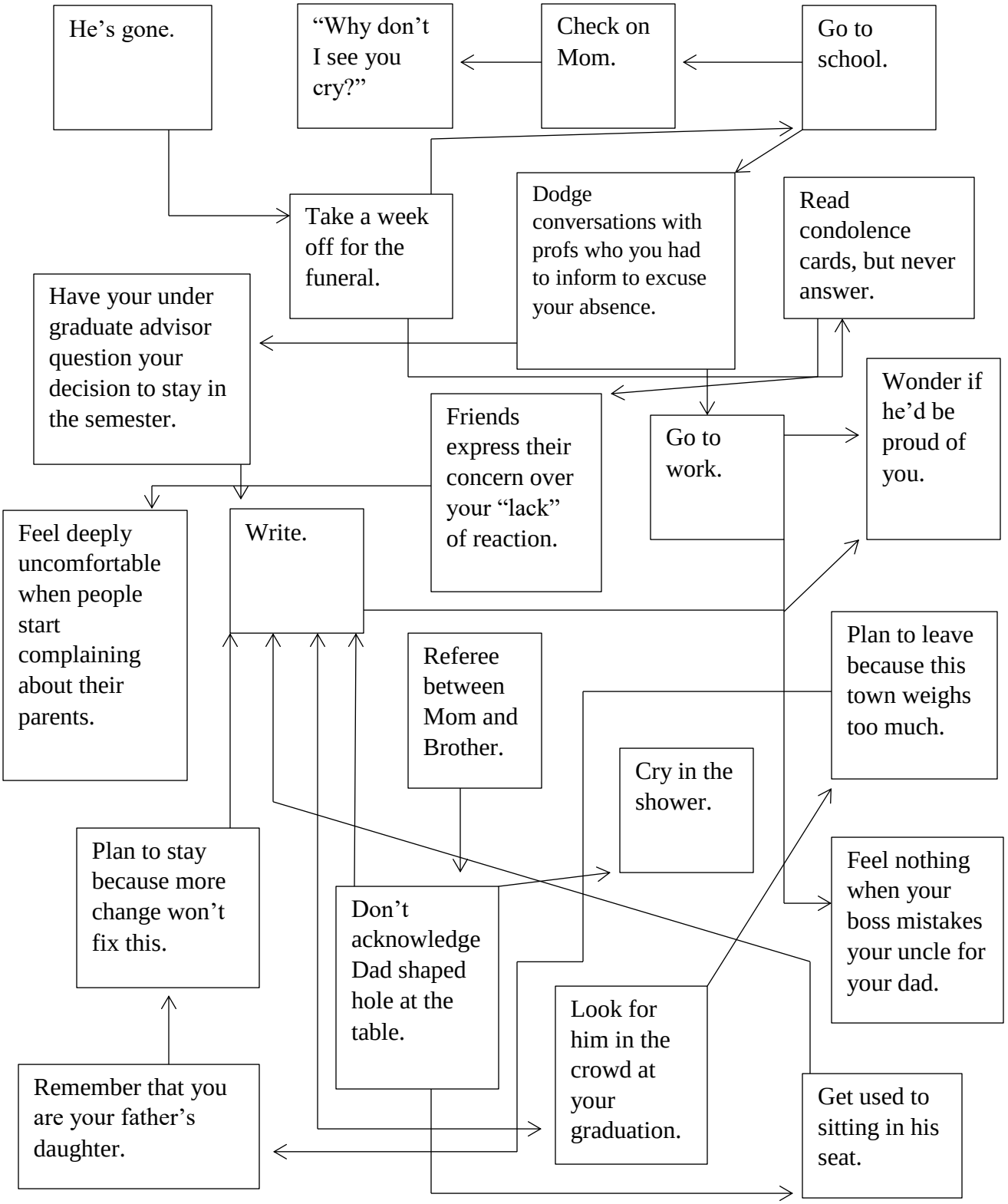
walker: median, buttress and convenient seat all in one, barometer of illness progress (see: wheelchair; buggerstick).

wheelchair: the final frontier, leg loss of the upper hand, barometer of illness progress (see: walker; buggerstick).

will: last way to tell us what he'd want but written down before, already in progress, he pulls his treasures from their rest in cigar boxes and asks if she wants the Rolex, too big for her wrist, the gold chain and amulet, she wears the chain, it settles on her sternum and with each step beating out p-r-o-u-d, beating out finish school: so she does, beating out travel: so she goes to France and as they drive through the countryside of Burgundy and it's so green like starting over or sweet grasses made for new born fawns and the guide tells her about how aristocrats used to hunt these woods and they're there the two of the, in those woods boots crushing that grass tracking a deer with a perfect white tail and they're hunting him and her and even though they're supposed to be quiet he pulls his arm back, fletching brushing cheek and laugh (see: goodbye).

Living Progression through Grief: A Flow Chart

Case III



Schrodinger's Daughter

He's sitting in the garage. A faint haze of cigarette smoke surrounds him.

"Dad, you scaring off the mice?"

"Dad?"

No answer. Trista walks around his chair, knows what she'll find, but there's a hope that lives somewhere behind her sternum that swears this time he'll snap back with "get me my 22 and I'll start," this time he'll get out of that red La-Z-Boy to hug her, this time his chin will rest on her crown like it used to. Hope sounds like her mother.

His eyes project nothing but white. No pupil to speak of. No colour. The smoke from his cigarette curls past his lips, past his white eyes, caressing the garage ceiling, wrapping around the garage door lift, not even drifting close to her.

It's starting again.

The Trial. That's what the doctors call it. 'The Trails' would be more accurate because it's never just one. Every treatment defined by multiplicity. Six rounds of chemo mixed with two-going-on-three different neurosurgeries yields? Blackouts, hallucinations, insomnia, seizures. (Wonder what radiation will add to the mix.) Name it and a trial will use it. Use it to break a person into base parts. Those base needs and wants that underline who he is: the curl of nicotine that flashes from bronchus to synapse and back a distillation of 40 plus years of friendly addiction, sleep stillness seeping into marrow where the dregs of ingrained first generation Canadian work ethic are unable to

prevent lids from pulling downward and into blankets. Eat and sleep: going from 65 years of accumulated independence to 6 months of utter dependence after only a few rounds.

That's what's left of the man who used to carefully brush the tangles from her hair when she was too small to grasp gentle, the man who spent Saturdays napping on the couch with WWII documentaries as his lullaby, the man who would hoard recipes clipped from magazines, taken from grocery stores, and use them as bookmarks in Tom Clancy or Robert Ludlum paperbacks, the man who well past teenage rebellion would still leave hunts early to hide under camp cabin porches and throw cherries bombs at unsuspecting fellows.

Sitting in the ICU waiting room, nails picking at the piping of the oddly stately grey leather couches, Trista wonders what would be left of her. What would she be if she was the one past those doors, if she was the one her family waited in twos for the buzz to let them see? Pale and hollow. Lips bitten to the quick, raw skin edges getting false soothing from nervous tongue. Always wearing a beanie, hair not very thick to begin with so chemical cocktail would strip the three quarters not shaved off for easy surgical access. Probably wouldn't talk much either. Probably obsess about the antiseptic smell, or the quiet. Watching TV, something loud and trashy, probably from TLC 'cause cancer and dying is better than 600 pounds and dying. Might as well end up on the preferable end of the dying spectrum. A red queen painted white. Off with her hair. Off with her head. Off with her mind. Cold and spoiled. Once a trial finishes that's all that's left.

Ugly, no?

The phone rings. Has rung and rung, on and off, for thirty-six hours. Dad's been under for fifty-four.

"How is he?"

"How is he doing?"

"Is he okay?"

"Our thoughts are with you."

"He's in our prayers."

"Tell him we're thinking of him."

"We're thinking of all of you."

"How is your mom?"

"If you need to talk, I'm here."

"We're here."

Hour fifty-five.

Rinse repeat.

Her mother found him the first time. All artic skin and sculpture stillness. She knew right away. Not her first trial. Her own father hibernated over and over. Funny, isn't it, how things repeat; daughter watching father, this cycle of unwanted inheritance. Daughters: hereditary witnesses to a possible execution. Probable.

Her cousin Matteo, Dad's sister's son, calls it a test. He says, "Cancer deems your worth." He says these words to them in the hospital, in the cafeteria while they slump over lukewarm lentil soup. "Cancer makes you stronger. It isn't anything more than you

can handle. It's judgement." Judgment, but for what? And whose? Give it a second, he'll get there.

Mom pushes away her bowl with its single spoonful missing, her mouth already turning down as her forearms create a barricade in front of her underbelly. Ulisse's spine stiffens as his fist clenches around the public safety approved plastic knife he'd been using to saw through dry chicken breast since legumes aren't a part of his new protein centric diet. Matteo never falters in his sermon, words flowing between each mouthful of cumin spiced broth. "It's really just a matter of faith, you know. Have to stay pious – slurp- go to the temple –slurp- sacrifices are also essential, you know. You can't be lax or things like this end up happening. But, Zio will be fine, just you wait, I've been praying and I've been making offerings every night. Diana has a plan for him."

Uncle Richard, Mom's brother, clears his throat. Cup of black cafeteria coffee, tasting both weak and burnt, wavering in his hand. "Have the doctors said anything new?" He leans across Formica table top, cutting Matteo out of Mom's field of vision.

"No. No change from the last time." Her voice doesn't climb over a whisper, but it doesn't need to. They're hyperaware of each ripple this fragile woman sends into the world.

"Don't worry Zia." Matteo starts gesturing with his spoon. Lentils and minced onions become broth cased bullets. Trista arches her brow at the 'Zia' he's tacked on. Laying it on a little thick today, Matty must be feeling particularly righteous. "It will all work out in the end, you'll see. These things take time."

Matteo goes back to eating his soup with a conclusive nod; the matter settled, as if with a prayer and a calf or two sickness will eradicate itself, as if he's already secured the

outcome and the family should trust that his word and faith will be enough. Uncle Richard places a meaty hand on Mom's shoulder, as he twists in the direction of the restrooms to see if Matteo's mother will return anytime soon. Ulisse shoves the now snapped plastic knife under his napkin.

Trista wishes Ryan were here, but he left around hour forty.

She doesn't think he's coming back.

"Are you still with us?"

The first thing her mother says to him once his eyes flicker open. The same thing she says after each of the episode. Almost routine now. As routine as chemo drips every other week, a pill caddy to mark AM and PM, and 57-hour operations.

He asks for a cigarette, "and coffee, a shit ton of cream, not too hot."

"We'll see about the coffee. But there's no way you're getting a cig." Ulisse responds white knuckle gripped at the foot at the bed. Mom fuses with the sheets, making sure they won't interfere with the IV lines, and the heart monitor, and the catheter, and the bone charms.

"Shut your mouth boy. And get me a fucking cigarette."

"Ulisse, just—" Mom tries to call a cease fire.

"Not a chance, old man, your meds—"

"Dad, maybe just rest—"

"Fuck off and get me a cigarette or don't bother coming back," spits off a fever bright tongue and sticks to the other three hearts in the room.

Five minutes later he asks, “Why’d Ulisse leave?” He’s forgotten again. His wife’s legs tremble; he can’t see below the bed frame. She sits as the tremble creeps up her torso.

Twenty minutes later he has his coffee and cigarette.

Hunger at its finest.

Trista wants silence. “Some quiet please; all I need is some peace and quiet please.” She sounds exactly like him when she does: the faint uptick on the second syllable of please and the crack every time she says quiet. Just like him and she swears her nails are already yellowing; only a matter of time until the smoke settles into her lungs. She wonders if she’s starting to unravel just like he is. A gradual yet instantaneous unmaking.

The noise echoes from her spine to her sternum, reverberating and reverberating until Trista feels it at a cellular level. Battering and grating: the heart monitor beeps, her phone vibrates with texts, the ventilator wheezes. Maybe they’ve all developed a trigger. The louder the heart monitor, the ventilator, or her phone, the closer an ending comes: alarm bells only ring when there’s something to be alarmed about. Wailing and grating. Nothing good comes from the noise. But every time his mouth opens she’s expecting a death rattle, so the resulting snore never fails to propel her heart from her gut to her throat. They’re on a precipice, a tipping point where he’s ok but he isn’t. Schrödinger’s father. He’s fine. Until he isn’t.

Trista’s just gotten off the phone with Ryan, who decided that a frank conversation about her father’s mortality was appropriate.

"You should really prepare yourself."

"Prepare myself." Trista chewed at her cheek.

"Yes, prepare yourself…There's only so many times he can come back from this."

"I'm aware." She has a plethora of alarms, constantly ringing, she's never not aware.

"Just, you should be ready for him to … you know."

"I know he's going to die, Ryan."

"I mean, of course, but—"

"I know the stats. They're rattled off at every appointment."

She'd directed the conversation to midterms after that.

Dr. Matthews catches her on the way back into her father's room.

"Trista, do you have a minute?"

Trista waits, phone gripped until she swears the pressure has silenced the constant buzzes of demands for updates.

"Things don't look good."

Because sunken eyes and an inability to remain awake for more than an hour might look fantastic?

"We're doing what we can to make him comfortable, but it's time to start preparing for the end."

“Ok.” She nods, because what else is she supposed to do? Rip the doctor’s heart out and transplant it into her father so those stats they keep returning to will be rendered moot?

Dr. Matthews nods then sweeps into the hallway, stethoscope glinting under the florescent lights.

Trista stays in the doorway. Who knew you could spend so much time talking about dying?

He spends most of his time with his eyes closed now. She doesn’t blame him. She blames him. A million little heart attacks every time she enters a room and can’t tell if he’s breathing. She finds his last cigarette pack and flushes it down the toilet. She goes to the gift shop downstairs and buys a new pack.

Maybe if she sits in a garage smoking this will all go away.

Act Sad the Neighbours are Watching: Writing About the Performative Societal and Linguistic Conventions which Govern Death, Grief, and Mourning in *Schrödinger's Daughter*

Death is one of the universal constants of human experience; no matter who you are, where you come from, or what you believe in, death will factor into your life. In North America, we have entire industries built around death: funeral parlours, coffin manufacturers, engraving for urns, and even artists who use the ashes of the deceased to create painting, sculpture, or jewellery. Every person has lost someone, will lose someone, and the resulting relationship between the deceased and the living is a complex one. Canadian literary powerhouse Margaret Atwood, speaking of the Mexican Day of the Dead holiday in *Negotiating with the Dead*, states that "[the] dead are considered to be still part of the community, but they are not permanent residents" (160). Atwood's observation is key to the resulting complexity and discomfort surrounding the ties between the living and the dead: some living people may still view the dead as members of societal structures, but the dead cannot contribute concretely to these structures. Atwood expands this notion, stating that:

> [Dead] people persist in the minds of the living. There have been very few human societies in which the dead are thought to vanish completely once they are dead. Sometimes there's a taboo against mentioning them openly, but that doesn't mean they're gone: the absence from a conversation of a known quantity is a very strong presence… (159)

One cannot deny that the dead still have a profound influence over the living. David G. Mandelbaum, in his essay "Social Uses of Funeral Rites," expands upon one of the

primary means of connection between these two spheres: the funeral or last rites. He states:

> Rites performed for the dead generally have important effects for the living. A funeral ceremony is personal in its focus and societal in its consequences. The people of every society have a pattern for dealing with the death of their fellows… [The] group must always have a plan of action in event of death. Certain things must be done after a death, whether it occurs in a very simple or in a highly complex society. The corpse must be disposed of; those who are bereaved—who are personally shocked and socially disoriented—must be helped to reorient themselves; the whole group must have a known way of readjustment after the loss of one of its members. (189)

Mandelbaum paints one of the funeral's primary functions as a means to negotiate with death on a societal level. The living must find ways to cope with loss and absence on a personal and public scale. Rituals and rites becomes the avenue in which individuals are prompted to channel their feelings of loss into both personally and publically. In this way, the bereaved are expected to adhere to societal grieving practices so that – in adhering to a ritualistic practice and schedule – they may be reabsorbed into regular society, after the defined mourning period.

It is this relationship—the influence that the dead hold over the living, and how the living mitigate between absence and absence-as-presence on a private and societal level—that became the driving force of my thesis. My creative thesis, entitled "Schrödinger's Daughter," explores the social norms which govern grief and mourning. The project, which is comprised of a series of interconnected short stories and found text

prose poems, follows a family dealing with the loss of their patriarch. The narrative is told through the perspective of the three remaining immediate family members: Trista, the deceased's daughter, acts as primary narrator, while Brigitte, the wife, and Ulisse, the son, act as secondary narrators. Each story weaves together to create a multilayered representation of the public and private grieving process, often reinterpreting events through multiple perspectives, illustrating the varied nature of grief. Through these speculative pieces, I seek to critique performative cultural practices, such as funerals and wakes, which regulate the way individuals mourn on a public level and how these public practices weave into the private expressions of grief.

I break my critique down into three main avenues: 1) exploring how grief operates as a performative action within societal systems such as the workplace, the neighbourhood, social media, and healthcare; 2) the utilization of elements of magical realism on a macro level (narrative and structure) to create defamiliarization and promote critical reception in an audience; and 3) the utilization of elements of speculative fiction on a micro level (language and metaphor) to compound defamiliarization and reinforce my critical aim.

Mourning Rituals as Performative Actions: Are They Effective?

One of the underlying questions posed in this project is: Am "I" mourning correctly? Is there a correct way to mourn? These questions underline an investment in the enactment of grief on a public scale: grief is intimately tied to the performance of the rituals associated with it. Are these rituals being performed properly? Must all rituals be performed and in which order? Trista and her family are enmeshed in this dialogue: they are attempting to mourn properly within the rituals of their religion while also coming to

terms with their loss at an individual level. Their grief is two-fold in every ritual: public performance of loss, and private attempt to reconcile their changed relationship dynamics and identities. In her ground-breaking text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, feminist critic Judith Butler outlines the concept of gender performativity. She writes:

> That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject. (173)

While Butler is concerned primarily with gender and gender expression in conjunction with queer and feminist theory, her conception of performativity as an enactment of public and social discourse on the body—which is then interpreted as an expression of inner integrity—can be transferred to my discussion of the body in mourning. Societally enforced mourning practices, such as funerals and wakes, are not expressions of grief inherent to the human condition, but learned behaviours as a result of public regulation. Philippe Aries, in his influential text, *The Hour of Our Death*, unpacks the discrepancy between societally mandated mourning rituals and actual lived feelings of loss and grief. According to his research, the ritualization of Western grief arose in the Middle Ages when "the priests and the mendicant friars, and later the confreres and the poor, took the place of the weeping family and friends in the home, the funeral procession, and the

church" (325). The ritualization grew to become more pronounced resulting in a time limit on expressions of emotion, Aries notes that:

> After a period of mourning, no further personal demonstrations of grief were tolerated. The man who was too afflicted to return to a normal life after the short period of time allowed by custom had no alternative than to retire to a monastery, or to the country, outside the world where he was known. (327)

Grief, then, fit into an expected time-period, and to either exceed or fall short of such a grieving session indicated a group or individual who no longer belonged to the societal norm. Expressions of grief during that period were highly policed resulting in the aforementioned discrepancy between ritual and genuine emotive expression.

> [Mourning] had become too highly ritualized and socialized to play the role it once filled, that of emotional release. It had become impersonal and cold. Instead of allowing people to express what they felt about death, it prevented them from doing so. Mourning acted as a screen between man and death. (327)

While Aries is referring to mourning practices popular from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century in these passages, I argue that the discrepancy is still present today; possibly exacerbated by the contemporary reliance and dependence on digital forms of mourning which add another set of actions for the mourner to complete, yet may create even greater distance between the living individual and death/the deceased. Such acts, then, set even more screens between the living and the deceased, having multiplied and literalized since Aries articulated his critique. Mourning has become an increasingly complex and layered performance, often with similar built-in judgements about the "appropriateness" of a particular act of mourning, and comprised of multiple acts on

multiple stages, such as the scenes in "Belonging(s)" (14) and in "Thumbs Aren't Made for Talking" (55) where Ulisse's girlfriend creates a Facebook memorial page to inform people of the father's passing. She brings the family's mourning practice into the digital realm, creating another venue where the family is expected to share information regarding the death and engage with the public. Beth, the girlfriend, deems this course of action appropriate and considers it a helpful part of the grieving process, but she flounders when she discovers that the family does not want to engage in this practice (68): Trista states that her father wouldn't have wanted to be a google search. The manner in which the family is expected to display their grief on a public level is in direct contrast with what they feel to be best on a personal level: they are pushed away from celebrating the father in their religious traditions and towards practices which distance them from his wishes.

I argue that the nature of societal performative mourning prompts a self-consciousness surrounding the mourning body which is then transferred into private mourning practice, much as Butler suggests with gender. It is the societal insistence upon sameness that Butler alludes to which prompts the disengagement of internal expression from performative action. Resulting in a conflict between an individual's internal reality and the one in which they are pushed to reflect outwardly. In my thesis, the contrast between "Dismember" (31) a piece written from the mother's perspective and how she's portrayed in the pieces from the children's perspective, such as "O' Death v. Toddlers" (25), is drastic. In "Dismember," I depict the emotional reality of Brigitte's grief: she has difficulty getting out of bed, and going through the motions of the day is a laborious and traumatic endeavour. In "O' Death v. Toddlers," none of this anguish is apparent to

Trista: Brigitte comes across as relatively well adjusted, passing as a woman who is grieving "properly": she never allows her own grief to overshadow Mrs. Schneider's, and even tries to regulate her daughter's behaviour at the funeral via a small expression of disappointment.

But this is not to say that ritual is completely divorced from effectively expressing grief. Trista and Ulisse find great comfort in the Cult of Diana's traditional funeral rites (2-5), while Brigitte finds solace in the traditional Christian ceremony she witnesses in "O' Death v. Toddlers" (25-27) that reflects the religious ceremonies she grew up with. Rituals fail, like Beth's attempt to force the family into a digital performance of grief, when they do not sustain or invent further connections between the deceased and the living. The traditional ceremony in "Vigil for the Moon" and the Christian ceremony in "O' Death v Toddlers" are effective grief rituals because they are relevant to the grieving bodies and the deceased: Trista and Ulisse are reminded of their father and his dedication to the hunt during the sacrifice, while Brigitte is able to grasp the comfort and community her childhood faith provided to her when she lost her parents and access it as she mourns her husband.

Canadian poet and scholar Priscilla Uppal, in *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy*, reiterates Aries and touches upon the disengagement between ritual and expression, and the continued importance of mourning despite that disengagement; asserting that "[mourning] ensures that ties are sustained, or even invented, not lost or ignored. The decline of traditional mourning rituals and elegiac consolation… might very well reflect the inadequacies of institutions, including the traditional elegy, to provide adequate means to mourn losses of identity" (264). Uppal,

like Butler and Aries, notes the possible ineffectuality of the existent forms of expression which govern the concretization of ephemeral concepts, such as gender or grief. This anxiety surrounding the ineffectuality and inauthenticity of performativity is present in contemporary literature which deals with grief: Helen MacDonald in her memoir *H is for Hawk* rejects traditional socially accepted grieving practice, such as memorials, which she considers to be inadequate; she seeks isolation from societal obligations and undertakes the solitary task of training a falcon as a means to cope with her father's death; Sina Queyras, in her poetic collection *MxT*, pulls apart the mechanics of grief through an engagement with traditional (such as the elegy) and non-traditional (such as engineering diagrams) forms of literary grieving. Queryras interrogates the regulation and quantification of grief through her attempts to translate grief into charts and diagrams which attempt to illustrate how grief progresses and develops. Both authors struggle to find an avenue to express their identities as a mourning body within the constraints of traditional mourning practice that does not resonate with them. The question thus becomes: how do characters mourn "properly" if the expressions available to them are not adequate representations of the internal conditions of grief? How must an individual deviate from normative grieving practices and how are these departures received by a community? Can mourning be more or less authentic in a multicultural society where more avenues for grief expression are seemingly available? And finally: how can I represent the language of mourning, especially in challenging that discourse in the very structures that enact grief and bereavement?

First, I begin to tackle these questions through direct engagement with the societal systems that govern grief and mourning; specifically the Canadian Revenue Agency or

CRA and Hospice. I critique these systems through the creation of found text prose poems which manipulate official documents to highlight their role in policing expressions of grief. I will begin by discussing "Are You an Orphan?" (21) and "So You're an Orphan" (42), which interrogate the CRA's role in policing grief. The two pieces outline the process a dependant or child of the deceased, in this case Trista, must undergo to gain access to their deceased parent or guardian's pension. In this section, I present the official documents in their original format, but instead of Trista filling them out properly, the way she writes all over the forms creates a narrative which outlines the outrage and frustration she feels at having to justify her connection to her father and having that connection translated into a monetary amount. For example, she writes on the initial set of forms in "Are You an Orphan?" in the section which requires her usual first name: "He chose her name, picked it and said this is my little girl" (21). The utilisation of such deliberately sentimental language and events creates juxtaposition between the highly regimented nature of the form and the emotional nature of the situation Trista experiences. She insists upon his continued personal connection, even in death, filling out his current address as: "On top of the dresser, below the wedding portrait. Next to their bed (his side). In their bedroom" (21). The form and Trista's amendments clash, highlighting the discrepancy between the experience of grief and the societal systems in which the grieving individual must navigate. There are structures for grieving, but this scene also reveals that there are also expectations that a grieving family member must not display grief within institutional structures: the form attempts to separate the emotion of loss from death and instead highlights the financial repercussions, rendering the connection between father and daughter one of economy not emotion. The distancing that Aries notes between

human beings and death rings tellingly in this instance; Trista deliberately reinjects her father's lived experience and identity back into a form which seeks to render him into a series of monthly payments.

I take a different approach when examining how Hospice contributes to the policing and regimenting of the grieving experience. I have created a series of flow charts and graphs to illustrate the way in which popular or "armchair" psychology has created an implicit set of expectations surrounding grief and bereavement counselling; how those assumptions are placed upon patients/clients who reveal that they are seeking help to deal with their grief; and how the assumptions surrounding the grieving process create a series of expectations which further polices the mourning process. The flow charts engage with the assumed progression of grief, while the graphs deal with the assumed intensity of grief over time. Each set can be divided into two categories: the assumed and the "actual." The assumed sets illustrate the way societal pressure enforces the belief that the grieving process functions in a predictable manner, while the "actual" sets detail the way in which the process functions for the individual characters. The object here is to create contrast between the linear and assumed process, and the complex, varied, and oftentimes cyclical nature of the "actual" process.

For example, the flow charts illustrate two assumed grieving processes: "Projected Progression Through Grief, Bastardized from Kübler-Ross by Armchair Psychologists Everywhere: A Flow Chart" (12) outlines the five notional stages of grief as proposed by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*: *What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy, and Their Own Families*; denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance; and "Projected Progression through ~~Grief~~

Bereavement, According to Hospice: A Flow Chart" (13) outlines the four stages of the grieving process Hospice envisions: shock and numbness, yearning and searching, disorganization and despair, and reorganization. Both assumed charts are linear in nature, each stage is numbered and is directed to flow into the next: there appears to be no room for variation or deviation or for even following this process in an alternative order. While on the other hand, the three "actual" charts, "Living Progression through Grief: A Flow Chart- Case I, Case II, and Case III" (37, 70, and 80), each representing a member of the family's' journey in grief, are explicitly non-linear in nature with no numbering or naming of stages. Instead, I replace the stages with events such as "Go to work mandated therapy group" found in Case I (37) and include quotations of words directed at that family member, such as "Look after your mom and sister" in Case II (70). This non-linearity and inclusion of dialogue serves to underscore the complex and varied experience of mourning: each individual processes grief differently and at a different pace. In this way, readers question the validity of treating the assumed models as gospel.

The forms, charts, and graphs reflect a societal position on sameness. They underscore the concrete ways in which the systems within North American society insist on strict expressions of grief in a public forum. Often, initial reactions to the forms, assumed charts, and assumed graph are that of acceptance, even by individuals who may not feel comfortable in progressing through set "stages" of grief. The questions being asked and the set boundaries, placed beside the "actual" sets, expose the disingenuous nature of regulated grief. It is this action of decontextualizing or displacing that brings me to the second way in which I seek to explore the questions surrounding the fraught

relationship between public performances of grief and private expressions of loss: displacing grief through utilisation of speculative elements.

Defamilarizing Grief

I argue that deliberate decontextualization or defamiliarization, using speculative elements, allows a reader to more readily critically engage with the entrenched values of his or her society. Viktor Shklovsky, in his essay "Art, as Device," explains how "defamiliarization," or in the following translation "enstrangement," functions within a text.

> The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the device of art is the "enstrangement" of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is, in art, an end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is the means to live through the making of a thing; what has been made does not matter in art. (162)

Shklovsky asserts that it is the action of reframing images, facts, objects, etc., within a text that allows an audience to come to true critical understanding of the thing reframed: "describing it as if seen for the first time, as if happening for the first time" (163). But how does defamiliarization look in practice? And what part does the speculative play?

My first example is from Margaret Atwood's 1998 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood utilises the explorative capability of speculative fiction to enable defamiliarization; the story "takes situations that actually exist to their logical conclusion if the cultural and political momentum of contemporary times continues on its trajectory" (Keifer-Boyd and Smith-Shank, 139). Specifically, Atwood explores the potentially

damning consequences of contemporary dominant patriarchal society continuing unchallenged and unquestioned. She displaces contemporary societal values (the labeling of woman as the subservient sex) into an exaggerated or foreign setting (a futuristic society where some women are held as sex slaves or 'breeders', fully at powerful men's disposal). It is the act of displacement which allows the critique of current cultural norms to become apparent in Atwood's novel. By emphasizing patriarchal values from the framework of the contemporary cultural moment, where they are entrenched and implicitly accepted, Atwood is able to critique those values and expose how they function to create power structures which influence behaviour.

To interrogate the norms which govern grief and mourning, I must destabilize them from their entrenched positions. As Atwood does with patriarchal norms, I reframe the practices which govern grief and mourning to expose their performative nature. But, while Atwood displaces the subject of her critique into a completely different frame of reality, I maintain a more realistic based narrative that incorporates speculative elements. I try to maintain a sense of immediacy in my critique of contemporary mourning practices, showing unquestionably that I am exploring the way in which Canadians mourn *now*, in the contemporary moment; thus, I feel it is necessary to partially root my narrative within a recognizable realm. I then incorporate the speculative elements into the mourning practices of the family, as most explicitly outlined in "Vigil for the Moon" (1). Trista, her brother, and to a lesser degree her mother, follow pagan-esque religious traditions which resemble the religious ceremonies of the Ancient Romans. The Cult of Diana, to which they belong, engages in anachronistic practices which clash with current cultural practices surrounding grief: their last rites include animal sacrifice, and

cremating the deceased in a funerary pyre at their home along with the sacrificed animals, in this case bulls (3-4).

Re-envisioning the mourning practices of the family purposefully redirects the critical gaze of the audience not on the mourning practices themselves, but on the system within which these practices operate and which regulates each act of bereavement. For example, in "Vigil for the Moon," the family must obtain permits from their municipality and their neighbourhood Homeowner's Association to hold the funeral ceremony in their backyard. They are met with a series of callous and insensitive questions: "How long will the ceremony at your residence last? Have you scheduled an appointment with a property inspector? Have you begun the permit process for the open burn?" (10). I present these passages in such a way as to encourage the reader to feel outrage over the fact that the family jumps through hoops to be able to send off their husband and father in a manner that is meaningful to them. The text encourages the reader to examine the way in which North American society reacts to mourning practices regarded as outside the norm, and to thus become aware of the inherently performative nature of societally enforced grieving practices. This scene is an example of defamiliarization at the macro level of the text. I will now move on to a discussion of defamiliarization at the micro level of the text, specifically the clichéd language and metaphor often used to communicate grief.

Defamiliarizing the Language and Metaphor of Grief

My concerns with immediacy, as explored in the previous section, I extend to the micro level of my project: specifically critiquing and exploring the language that surrounds grief and how the available language usually does not effectively express the lived conditions of grief. Within the manuscript, characters will often find themselves

retreating to clichéd phrases when dealing with the grieving body and death. For example, to express condolences many well-wishers have been trained to respond with: "I am so sorry for your loss," "They're in a better place now," "At least their suffering is over," or "They were taken too young." French critic Jean Paulhan, in *The Flower of Tarbes, Or, Terror in Literature,* theorizes the place of clichés in writing:

> Clichés may once again take up residence in literature the day they are at last deprived of their ambiguity and their confusion. Now all it should require, since the confusion stems from a doubt as to their nature, is simply for us to agree, once and for all, to accept them as clichés. In short, we simply need to make commonplace expressions common ... (79)

In this statement, Paulhan reveals the crux of the cliché: while the phrases are assumed to be understood by all, they are still ambiguous in their meaning, and often hollow for the receiver (be that a reader or actual person in mourning). For example, in the first story, Ryan, Trista's ex, attempts to speak to her during her father's wake. He asks her, "how [she's] *really* doing" (9). He is attempting to gain her confidence and have her confide in him. But his stock phrase falls flat: she dismisses his question and highlights its ineffectual nature, responding with, "How do you think?" (9).

I argue that this inherent confusion of reception can be traced to the deconstructionist concept of *différance.* Noted philosopher and the father of deconstructionist theory, Jacques Derrida, coined the term *différance* to refer to the continuous gap between signifier and signified that keeps meaning from ever settling into something stable: "the process of scission and division which would produce or constitute different things or differences" (Derrida 9). The clichéd language that often surrounds

narratives of death and subsequent grief cannot effectively communicate the experience of mourning due to the gap between what is said and what is meant. The death of a loved one is an experience which changes the way one communicates, and an experience which widens the interpretive gap between the grieving body and the non-grieving interpreter. So how can one close this interpretive gap and communicate the lived experience of grief without retreating to cliché?

I seek to close the interpretive gap and underscore the performative nature of contemporary mourning practice through defamiliarization at the micro level of the text. I approach this literary strategy in two forms; the first is literalizing the metaphors used to describe grief. Ursula K. Le Guin, in her speculative short story "Schrödinger's Cat," demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach as she literalizes the metaphorical phrase "break up," which is often used to describe the ending of a romantic relationship. She writes, "Well, the couple I was telling you about finally broke up. The pieces of him trotted around bouncing and cheeping like little chicks, but she was finally reduced to nothing but a mass of nerves: rather like chicken wire, in fact, but hopelessly tangled" (54). In this passage, the couple in question has literally broken into pieces. They, like their relationship, have been broken apart and left in shambles. To illustrate the lived experience of terminating a relationship, Le Guin begins with the stock phrase to describe the phenomenon and gives it new life through literalizing it; in effect, writing the scene so that readers experience Shklovsky's defamiliarization. By removing "break up" from its expected metaphorical context and reworking it to display a literal event, the phrase communicates the pain and uncertainty felt after a relationship comes to an end. A couple

has been split apart and so Le Guin literally splits them; thus, reinvigorating the cliché with new life and energy.

As Le Guin does with "break up," I too interrogate the phrase "falling apart," a stock metaphorical phrase used to describe the emotional upheaval of attempting to cope with loss. This expression attempts to communicate the pain and uncertainty individuals experience dealing with death of a loved one, but it has lost much of its emotional punch. I interrogate "falling apart" in "Dismember" (31), which details a day in Brigitte, the mother/wife's, life as she attempts to deal with her intense feelings of loss and grief. She spends the day literally falling apart: she loses a tooth as she wishes Trista goodbye before she heads to school (31), her "stomach almost clogs the shower drain… [intestines] are looped around the new safety bars screwed into the title walls." (32), her "optic nerve is bobbing in [her] morning coffee…[silver] teaspoon spinning ciliary body round and round and round…[iris] breaking the surface on every fourth or fifth rotation," (33). Brigitte is overwhelmed by her emotions, and the way I narratively communicate her pain is to enact it, to show how her loss "breaks her down" and leaves her "in pieces." My choice to root the literalizing of "falling apart" in the breakdown of the body itself, was to demonstrate that grief is not a kind or pleasant emotion. It is disagreeable and physically abhorrent. But emotional pain is difficult to visualize or comprehend, so by writing the emotional pain of grief onto the physical body, and thus recontextualizing it both textually and viscerally, the reader may come to understand and truly comprehend what it means to "fall apart."

My second strategy is the redefinition of language that occurs after the trauma of losing a loved one. I achieve such traumatic delineation through the creation of a

colloquial dictionary, entitled "Dictionary for the Dying: A Guide to Corporeal Linguistics" (71); taking inspiration from Gustave Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas,* a satirical text composed of dictionary entries which critiques the clichés that characterized French society during the regime of Napoleon III. I have created a lexicon of phrases that flagrantly differ from the perceived norm that envisages sorrow. When one thinks of words associated with grief, many that come to mind are almost exclusively associated with death or funeral rites or sadness, i.e. coffin, crying, tears, etc. But the phrases that undergo the most redefinition, post trauma, are often the mundane: the ones that occur in everyday conversation between the mourner and the deceased: the ones that typified their relationship. For example, within this text of my manuscript, I redefine cigarette(s) to reflect the daughter's loss of her father, as well as conveying how the father considered smoking a marker of his life, not of his death. My entry reads as follows:

> cigarettes: highest order distraction, new communion, way to suck health back into his lungs one smoke curl at a time, started as a teen counting days in nicotine stained butts so there's no reason to stop counting now even if it's counting down, way to make one with the ash since he knows what's coming but we haven't caught on quite yet. (72)

To this family, and in particular Trista from whose perspective the dictionary is written, cigarettes reference the objects themselves as well as some of the memories of the father. A cigarette signifies her father's addiction, his youth, his ill health, and his death. All her memories of him become wrapped up in these three syllables and she must negotiate between the denotative and connotative meaning of the word as she attempts to

communicate her grief. By only providing the connotative meanings as produced by trauma, I expose how grief retools communication itself and forces an audience to close the gap between the living and the dead.

The Work of Communicating Grief

Grieving is not an easy task. It is emotionally draining and made doubly so due to societal enforced mourning practices or social disregard which may distance the grieving body from authentic emotional expression in times of trauma. Within my manuscript, I have strived to interrogate the performative nature of contemporary mourning through active engagement with the theories of Butler and Foucault; a deconstruction of CRA/CPP forms in "Are You an Orphan?" and "So You're an Orphan," and notional grief trajectory models in the flow charts and graphs. I use Shklovsky's enstrangement in combination with speculative elements at the macro level of the text to decontextualize grief and prompt critical engagement with a reader; through the example of "Vigil for the Moon," and at the micro level, through literalizing metaphor in "Dismember" and redefining communication in "Dictionary for the Dying: A Guide to Corporeal linguistics. These elements combine to present a reflection of the grieving process which shortens the distance of the interpretive gap between societal mourning practices and the lived experience of the grieving body. Christian Riegel, in the introduction to *Response to Death: The Literary Work of Mourning*, puts it best: "[what] literary history tells us is that while words always fail to replace a lost one, they can succeed at helping the survivors to work through and understand their loss" (xix). Telling the story of grief allows that story to live in the world. So grieve. And tell the story of you and the one you

lost. You'll never forget the people who live in those stories; you'll always hold those words

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