

Elegy

She was a candle, the last brightness of a tiny flame on a black stump wick. She had burned before, she knew that, lying here at the bottom in a well of hot wax and charcoal. Burned and lit up places around her, burned and let out warmth and scent and light. Her phone was ringing again somewhere. Pinging dutifully but muffled. Somewhere. She was, in any case, just standing there looking in her wardrobe at nothing, smouldering out on her last length of blackened fibres and her jeans were unwashed and her hair was unwashed.

She sat on the toilet and read a post about how vitamin supplements were a total scam. The nutrients couldn't cross the barrier into the bloodstream, it was all a con. That you could take all manner of powders and pills and let them brew in the cauldron of your gastric juices and gain absolutely nothing from the exercise. That it meant nothing.

She needed to google this further. She would lie down once more in her catafalque. She would pull the silky bamboo sheets to her neck. She would nestle in with her phone beneath the soft blankets and furs in shades of fawn and dusty pink. She would enter that gentle blue stream of information. But online, people were asking each other and asking each other. Online, they were aware of the fluorescent outline of her absence. No one knew What Had Happened. Online she had asked, only days before, *how much protein is in toxic masculinity?*

'What are you doing?' he asked.

'I am Typing an Email,' she lied.

When you google tragedy it gives you results about plays.

'Ok, well I'm heading out to the shops if you need anything?'

She shook her head, flicked back to the clandestine tab she had quickly swished away. She could feel a weather inside her. There was a turbulent system of wild and unstoppable meaning. There was a new understanding of Elizabethan theatre.

Lying in her bed, she recalled an *Atlantic* article about eco-friendly sex. A moral ground to be thrashed out about how to indulge in pleasure now, because aside from the microplastics found in the testicles, the ovaries, the brain, there was just a general Moral Ground. *Was it the Atlantic?* At the time, she had asked her partner as he walked past her on the couch with her laptop in the pyramid of her knees whether he had ever considered the environmental impact of their lovemaking. He, sweetly, sat down next to her and put his hand gently on her arm.

vegan sex

ethical sex

ecofriendly sex toys

sexual wellness vegan

vegan erectile dysfunction

best foods for sex

vegan sex better

She was not really sure what day it was. She would say goodbye in her own way. She would rise up from this fabric swamp.

His head appeared around the bedroom door and whispered, ‘Babe, there’s a phone call from your aunty Su—’

I M A S L E E P she mouthed and waved her greyish hands in the negative, laid back down.

The next morning she realised that they had all been betrayed by culture. It was credible to experience loss aesthetically. She duly wore her least sexy activewear. She would like to eat something but couldn’t stomach a single thing he offered her in easy beige tones, ‘a cut up apple? a bit of toast? I can grab some hot chips if you like?’ The joke was that RIP was a meme and now the algorithm was clogging up her feed with RIP AVO TOAST YOU WOULD HAVE LOVED PISTACHIO PAPI Was she a joke now? Was this all actually really embarrassing? Was she now a sad suction cup section of the internet that people dump condolences into? No pith? No flippant exclamations? Was this ok? Were people ok with this? Had she condolenced someone in this way before? Closed eyes back to greyness.

Her sister had Arrived and was At The Airport. She immediately texted her Top 10 funeral looks this summer beneath a bed-hair panda-eyed resting bitchface selfie and they laughed and laughed.

...‘a peeled orange?’

Could she manage a mirror selfie without it seeming vulgar?

Their brother, internet famous for his rooster Captain Sparkles, would not pick up the phone. His petition to keep his pet in the inner Melbourne suburbs against the will of his neighbours gained more than fifteen thousand signatures that resulted in the bird still ending up

rehomed with a millennial bio-dynamic farmer on the Murray, finally texted Can't talk just sorting myself out :(

“Urban Rooster Sparks Debate About Local Laws”. They had given him pronouns. Save Captain Sparkles everyone proclaimed. Popular stencilled street art: (V Melbourne our sister commented when she sent me the reel) “Our Disconnect from Nature is Having Serious Ramifications for City-Dwellers” wrote one journalist for *Inverse*. It was not about roosters. This is worse than the Captain, he kept replying to her logistical questions (ironically?).

She could not judge things. She was unable to feel moods. There were lawyers who needed to speak to her urgently. A reply guy sent her a link to the good funeral guide via X.

On the couch they were a double-ended sister sausage wrapped in a heavy down doona cat pj's and scrunchy top-knot crowns. They did matching toe polish. They shared the packet of chips between them and stayed up till three watching completely fucking nothing. She burned her good candle, they were too loud but he didn't come out to shush them.

But seriously, who's in charge of the family now abahahaha

Remember that time? You're dreaming it now. You were just a little child, your sister a little child, your brother unborn. You were all driving back from a trip somewhere, far away. They had stopped the car at a green-kissed playground in the forest and you and your sister were birds that flitted from monkey bar to slide to swing. They were there, your parents, embracing, leaning on the side of the car laughing. You flew away, curious, closer to the leafy green and though you didn't look back at the time, in the dream you can see her stepped forward from his arms, calling out to you, calling out 'Come back don't go so far,' and she called your name, the name that only she called you, 'Birdy!'

'Birdy!'

She was awake and the day was too bright, and she showered still half in the dream. She sat in her towel on the bed and wrote a benign general response *in this difficult time*. No one would ever call her that name again.

what to wear to funeral

funeral attire sexy

funeral attire modern

do you have to wear black at funeral

black dress serious

funeral hair

funeral makeup

myers opening hours

Her sister cried quietly in the bathroom.

can you wear nail polish at a funeral

A pair of women waited at the doors of the chapel to greet her and her sister in compassionate tones. They were also sisters and when she asked them for a selfie they politely declined. She felt insane. She could not stop panicking and smiling. She would look at her sister's face at increments throughout the day and, seeing an orb of grief, worried that she might also look just as awful. She wanted this all to be over. She wanted to remember the things she was sure she'd forgotten.

On Insta last night, a beautiful face, a study revealing that mental stress aged skin as quickly as smoking. Her desire for spf protection consumed her completely as they stood graveside in the outdoors of the cemetery. She saw crow's feet encroaching on the unwilling epidermis of her orbital region. She craved an antioxidant masque. She could not hear sounds, only see radiant free radicals bombarding her once gossamer visage. Yet here she stood, an absolute mutant that elected not to wear a hat (too funereal) earlier that morning, the decision of a crazed lunatic, which it was.

Her ex-boyfriend wore a dark blue suit, put his hand on her upper-arm and frowned delicately *was she ok* and she involuntarily imagined his cock beneath his trousers wearing a little black funeral bow. Instantly guilty she tittered at his (now, apparently) wife saying she looked fucking amazing she loved her shoes hope Ben was treating her well and they all just absolutely died. She took photos of the flowers. She took close-ups of a white rose.

At the wake it hit her, like really hit her. She hissed at people tenderly wanting to help. Her sister gauchely drunk *in this trying moment*. She sat on the side of the bath and checked her feed.

Knocking. 'Honey, what are you doing?'

'I am Just Replying to the Lawyers.'

There was no way that anything online was worth missing this wake for. Nothing. White rose pic *a beautiful goodbye* she still posted.

tattoo when someone dies

tattoo death

are tattoos a bad idea

are tattoos bogan

tattoo white rose

tattoo funeral bow

She briskly swiped up. She stood and squashed her feet back into her heels, reapplied a muted lip. She Blocked It All Out. She descended upon the kitchen like a reincarnated and sexy Julia Childs. She lifted laden platters aloft and offered fragrant morsels to black-clad guests. She set her phone to Do Not Disturb, she glistened with purpose. She ate several mini quiches. She spoke in a reverent voice with Aunty Mara. She collected soggy paper plates and slicked them together in a pile on the counter with condiments and crumbs. She maintained Composure. She marvelled at the turnout with her uncle. Sorry, she did not know who made the chocolate slice, no. She absorbed all the many compliments on her Lovely Eulogy.

Do not think *accident*.

Do not think *flesh*.

Do not think *gone*.

‘Did I do ok?’

‘You did great babe. It was real and it was special.’

I’m sorry I have to go her brother had said apparently. Her sister, beyond fury, gave a rasped recounting, but she had been checking the levels of muffins. ‘Sorry, I didn’t notice! I was checking the muffins!’ A reel about a lost dog entirely destroying her in the walk-in pantry.

Later, she was somehow clean and in bed. She was somehow still alive, still selecting images for the carousel, still breathing. Here, she somehow still mattered even when the most important person wasn’t there to mean anything at all. She relinquished that night vision glow. The pillow was soft, the pillow concealed stiff tissues.

In the dark, she stared at the ceiling and reached back in her mind for the day. She would lacquer it in her memory like a treasured relic. Let it colour her past rememberings, let it hone her future significations like the serrated edge of a blade. Her fingers tingled for her phone. And

in the picture in her mind, she held only indiscriminate murmurs, or people smiling soft horror at her passing. Holding her sister's hair back from the bowl. She saw plates of food, spongy lawn, ex-boyf wife, where was the church? Oh! There she was, standing on that gilt plinth. Swathed in golden refraction from religious iconography and a rippling stained-glass light. Stain, a stain on the carpet near the lectern. She could not, however, remember what she said while she stood there alone. She recalled the sleek and closed recycled wood coffin, just a coffin as anything, holding remains

(Do not think *remains*)

how it produced its own gravity, there in the front of the church, a calm finality, a beacon of devastation, a costly gestalt reminiscent of mid-century furniture. But she needed the words, words that held the meaning, blocked out by a blanket of pain. That moment of fighting against a powerful black grief which, sensing a reverent audience, raged and tried to force itself out into the open where it knew it deserved to be.

She turned over and closed her eyes. She reached back inside herself to that blackgold moment to conjure those words that had passed through her lips, let them be set in the stone of her mind, please let her see past the black, oh that Lovely Eulogy! *Did I do ok?* But as she faded away from black sadness into warm oblivion the only thing she could remember was 'Mama' and 'Goodnight'.