

# I Think I Get It

Jerry Bones

My grandparents died with a plan. When one of them would be too sick to move or eat or sleep, the other would slide open the hidden panel in the closet wall, reach into the crawlspace, and pull out the box of narcotic contraband that had been collected throughout the years. Petting my Grandmother's head as she lay on the couch too sick to bathe or pee by herself, my Grandfather slipped pills into her mouth one after another, like how one would a dog under the table. He carried her to the bedroom, a tired child asleep in his arms, more than ready for bed, and lay her gently there. Then he took his own pills, and then they slept.

They wanted badly to be cremated—no point in boxing up remains and taking up space in the earth. They looked at death as they did all things—what would be easiest for everybody? Their bodies were turned to ash and handed to the family in a little cardboard box with two plastic bags of memories inside, labeled and sealed. We decided they would be scattered in the creek behind my rich aunt's big house. The creek ran to the Mississippi River so my Grandfather could live out his dreams of being a catfish and my Grandmother could dance off the rocks and spin through whirlpools. The twelve of us, six dogs, and one smaller dog that was more closely related to the rat family than to canines, gathered at the creek with a grim disposition that's often associated with elderly assisted suicide. There was wine, paper cups, and tissues.

I don't remember which aunt went first, but words were said, eyes leaked, and awkward laughter exchanged over well-rehearsed jokes. My father didn't start

laughing till two wine cups in, which he downed during the second Aunt's speech. She was reaching her hand into each of the bags like she was cleaning the vacuum's dust compartment. In the river, the ashes didn't move. They waited patiently til' they were whole before moving towards wherever. Dad finished his wine and was ready for his turn.

"This is exactly how he wanted to go. On his own terms," he said, envying the ashes. The dogs stared. The rat squeaked. He shook the bags into the water and watched them swirl into the pool where they rose up and out of the water towards wherever. I looked at the wine and thought about life, trying to be deep in a moment of Zen and clarity but my thoughts were as uncollected as the ashes. Particles swirled through my lobes trying desperately to see meaning where there was none. The dogs didn't care for meaning either.

They jumped in—no leashes to restrain them—finally able to give my grandparents the kisses they always rejected. Immersed in the moment and the water and the ashes the seven dogs flopped to and fro amidst the sadness, and the moment became clear between the shouting and sobbing. One by one they emerged from the creek and stood in the circle of all of us, and they shook. They shook the bags off their fur, they shook the melancholy moment off all of us and onto all of us until we were as covered in grandparent as they were. Wine was no cure. Tissues were for the weak, and as I stood there covered in skin and clothes and legacy, I convulsed from my stomach and lungs with happy little hiccups. Laughter surfaced from my throat but my mouth couldn't let it out, so I stood there smiling and twitching. I think I got it.

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