

# Requiem

In the style of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

*Ava St. Vincent*

It's so much worse to see him laying in a casket than to see him dying with a bullet in his chest because it means he's really gone and I can't see him again ever ever ever. It's so much worse because there are all these people gawking at him all shattered and dead. When he was dying, at least it was our shared moment not some crazy gross spectacle. Why why why? They did a good job of making him look "handsome" if "handsome" means "unreal" and "like a really good wax figure." They even put the color back in him. He was so so so pale before. Like snow or clouds or doves. So pale so pale I am Lady Macbeth (one time we went to see Macbeth because he liked Shakespeare and I read it once in high school) before she killed herself. I keep washing my hands. They still smell like blood I think and if I squint I can still see it.

He'll never hold me again and he'll never twist his wedding band around his finger but I still have mine and I'm going to wear it for a long long time longer than I wear black. He'll never go to work (which I think he would secretly like because I always got the impression he wasn't fond of work.) Never pull his hair back he kept it long like a pirate or a Revolutionary war patriot. Never snore. He'll never read a long time before coming to bed with me (I think I will miss him waking me up like that) never never never do anything that he used to. Never again, never.

Everyone is talking. Some people are crying. I want to cry but I'm not sure how because I already did so much. I hope nobody thinks I am cold.

*Roderick Rowatt*

Ava isn't crying. I am only a little. Ava is all black except her skin, which is so pale it looks like she should be the dead one, not Silas. If I hadn't known her a long time, I would think she dyed her hair and wore color contacts to go with her plain black dress. Poor widow, little raven without her wolf.

The priest hasn't started giving his speech yet since it's not time yet, not quite. He's standing in the corner talking to some icicle-eyed lady I've never seen probably Ava's friend. She reminds me of a snake.

There's the doctor, a colleague of Silas's, and his fiancée. He is crying but I wouldn't think he would have so much every time I met him he seemed very distant. She is not crying. She's watching everyone. Me yet?

My wife and daughter couldn't come today because they both have the flu.

My son is up at the casket, staring. He must feel so sad. Silas was my cousin, his too, but Aiden always thought of him as an uncle, liked him a lot. He's only seven. I wonder if he understands what he's seeing?

*Linnea Morgan*

"I'm glad I knew him," Wulfram tells me. "I don't think I'd be able to talk about a dead man I didn't know. Used to come and take confession from me, I could tell by his voice. He wasn't even Catholic."

These are the words he is telling me. I nod, but I'm staring at the casket like everyone. There is a little boy there. I feel sorry for him. He shouldn't have to deal with things like that, not so young. I have for a while, being a prison guard. People tell me it's a morbid job.

What was it like when he died? He got shot, but they still don't know who held the gun, but I have an idea of who it was. It was him. Ava never saw it, but he was a horribly unstable person. I don't like to say that about people, but it's true. He couldn't take it anymore, so he took a gun to his chest and shot himself on the front porch. Someone was there, I bet, an accomplice to pry the gun from his hands and bury it.

And then he bled all over the porch, and Ava came down because she heard the gunshot. Came down in her nightgown all crumpled from sleeping, I bet. Hair all askew. And then she

saw, and she screamed, and she got the blood on her hands. And she never would know that it was probably what he wanted. Ha!

“I think he was Lutheran or something,” Wulfram says.

“Yeah, I think that’s right.”

*Wulfram Laine*

“I’m glad I knew him. I don’t think I’d be able to talk about a dead man I didn’t know. Used to come and take confession from me, I could tell by his voice. He wasn’t even Catholic.”

I adjust my jacket collar. It’s making me uncomfortable.

I say, “I think he was Lutheran or something.”

“Yeah, I think that’s right,” Linnea replies. She’s looking at the casket, not even the body in it. Silas isn’t there, not really, anymore anyway, because his soul’s off somewhere else. Heaven, or Purgatory. It can’t be Hell, because he was a Christian, even if he wasn’t Catholic like Linnea and I. All I can think, and I think this for his wife, is part of Psalm 23.

Nam et si ambulavero in medio umbrae mortis non timebo mala quoniam tu mecum es virga tua  
et baculus tuus ipsa me consolata sunt.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil...” I whisper to myself, for Ava. Linnea doesn’t hear me.

*Aiden Rowatt*

Silas doesn't look dead. He reminds me of Dracula, which Daddy let me watch because it's in black and white and it isn't scary. Except he doesn't look like Mr. Lugosi but he still is wearing a tuxedo like a vampire How did he get into those clothes if he's dead?

I hope he doesn't start sucking all the red red blood right out of out of pretty ladies' necks and making people go crazy and eat flies.

*Andre Ghiaccio*

I worked with him such a long time and still I wouldn't have thought I would cry so hard but there are tears in my eyes and they sting and my breath catches in my chest and it stings, too. Elena squeezes my arm but it doesn't help.

I could have helped.

I could have helped.

I could have helped, if I had been there.

Elena Bianchi

Can't believe he dragged me here. We're not even married yet (We've been looking at engagement rings. Such pretty rings.) and he's taking me here with all these people I don't know. I tap the heel of my shoe against the wood floor. It clacks. I adjust the hem of my black skirt. He's crying Why? I squeeze his arm.

I bet there are scandals everywhere in this room. All over the place. I know it, I really do. I really, really do.

The dead man, I bet he was crazy. Crazy people get shot all the time, and that's how he died. Somebody shot him maybe for revenge or maybe because he owed money or maybe just because they didn't like him.

Or maybe because he slept with their wife.

His own wife is a pretty little thing. Black hair, black eyes, white skin. She looks a lot younger than him. I think Andre told me he was thirty-eight or thirty-seven. She doesn't look a day over twenty-four, if that even. Just screams trophy wife. No, not screams. Bares. Like a siren. I bet he had a lot of lovers, too. Maybe some of them were younger than his lovely goth-girl wife. Hah, yeah... I'd love it if Andre would take me out dancing. We've been looking at rings. Such pretty rings. I'd rather be wearing white today, but that's not for a while. Such a pretty rings...

*Silas St. Vincent*

I am sorry, so sorry, but I forgive her.