**Adult - Long form #5**

**They’ll Be So Lonely They Could Die**

I wasn’t really her granddaughter. I told her that the first day, but all she did was look at me and say, “Take your shoes off, Beverly.” After that she called me Beverly though my name was Luanne.

I didn’t know that Beverly was her grandbaby until weeks later when I seen her daughter visiting. “Are you here for Doris,” I asked real sweet. It was awkward to run into the families. It reminded you that them people were going to die and leave behind folks. She said, “Yes,” and kept looking at me like she wanted to ask who the heck I was. I told her I was with the hospice center. “Oh. Well, thank you,” she said. That’s when I saw little Beverly hiding behind her mamma. I was much closer to being that daughter than being Beverly’s age, but that was the thing with Doris. She didn’t remember nothing right.

Both me and the daughter walked into Doris’ room. I should have gone home, seeing that her family was there, but I needed the hours. I sat in a corner and told them I’d be there if they needed anything. Her daughter gave me an awful look. She was annoyed I was there, but so was I. I had some place I wanted to be too, but here I was not being there.

At first the daughter asked things like, “How are they treating you, mom?” and Doris would sit there and nod her head and rub her daughter’s hands. “Glenn,” Doris would say, her lips were going in her mouth while she smiled since she didn’t have no teeth. The daughter, who I guessed was Glenn, would rub her mother’s hand too. And as they did that they just forgot I was there. Glenn started to talk about her husband and all the hours he put in at work. Doris still just nodded her head and kissed Glenn on the cheeks. That’s when Glenn said, “Mom, Beverly is four years old now. Aren’t you sweetie?” Glenn picked Beverly up to put her next to her grandma, but the poor little girl was so shy. Glenn gave up, put Beverley back on the couch, and turned her on some cartoons. I watched a bit of them as Glenn kept talking to her mamma.

When it was time for them to go I waved goodbye to the two of them, but Glenn didn’t wave back. I let it go seeing how I knew how hard it was to be missing your mamma. The way Doris was in it was like she wasn’t even there for old Glenn.

After those two left I went back to Doris’ room to check on her.

“How are you feeling today,” I asked her. That’s what they trained me to say. We were supposed to kind of see if their conditions were getting any worse.

“You must be Beverly,” she said. She kissed my hands. “So good for you to come see me. No one ever sees me.” She frowned causing her skin to hang all off her face since it was so loose. It was sad she was so thin

“That’s silly, Doris. Your daughter just came to see you,” I said.

“My daughter hasn’t seen me once I tell you.” Her skin hung down a little lower.

“That’s not true,” I said.

“Don’t tell me what is true and what isn’t.”

“Well, Doris, I’m here to see you.” She grabbed my hand and rubbed it like she rubbed her daughter’s. I tried to think who she thought I was just then. I wasn’t sure if she knew who Beverly was. I wasn’t sure if she knew who her daughter was or not either. It broke my heart to think that she sat there all day thinking that no one loved her. If only her brain was in the right way that she could remember.

~V~

The truth to the fact was that I only knew Doris because I got in some trouble awhile back. Honest to god, if I was holding a bible, I’d tell you that it was because I had gotten into some stuff I shouldn’t had. I was a little younger, my twenties or so, and I met a man. That was the first thing I did wrong, ever letting a man lead me along. But anyway, this man was called Gonzo, though his Christian name was Paul. Gonzo and I were together for a while and that was the first time I ever did any real drug besides toking. But you know what happens when a man’s got you in his arms and treats you like something special. So I did some. I didn’t see it being a problem until it already was one. I was needing more than I had any money for. That’s how it gets you. I started to have to sell, if you know what I mean. I sold at a gas station off Mockingbird. That’s when they got me. Honest to god, it was the most embarrassing phone call of my life telling someone I was busted for hooking.

They put me in the county jail. I stayed there for three nights before they kicked me out. There wasn’t a bed in that place open for me or anybody. After it was all done I ended up getting some time served with a little probation.

Sometimes I wished that I had stayed in a little longer. Had I stayed in maybe I would of got clean. I was trying, hand to god. It was just hard to stop it once you started. Plus I was still with Gonzo. There wasn’t no way I’d be able to quit with him and there was no way I’d be able to leave him either. I told him I was done once, but he told me that no man would want a whore like me. I left the house, but soon I found no place to go. I walked the old gas station until I found a guy. I stayed at his place that night. He even bought me some stuff. But I went back to Gonzo the next day. I didn’t want to have to sell for the rest of my life just to live. And being real honest, Gonzo was probably right about the other. I was thirty pounds too small to find any man that would really want me full time. But the point of all this was that the reason I knew Doris was because of all that mess with Gonzo. With my probation I had so many hours of service do, so I went on one of them websites and saw the hospice was looking and that’s where I met Doris.

~V~

I was maybe half way through the hours when it happened. Before it happened Doris always had her a bit of that old lady attitude if you know what I mean. But I didn’t much mind. I didn’t put too much stock in the work. Really and truthful I had the shakes and just wanted to go home most the time. But that day Doris was having an episode cause her condition was getting worse. That’s when the old broad changed. It was a real violent and vulgar affair.

I was reading Doris a magazine when her nurse came in.

“Good morning, Miss Doris,” the nurse said. Doris just looked at her.

“Who are you,” Doris asked.

“Miss Doris, you know me. It’s Samantha.”

“Samantha?”

“Yes, ma’am. Rise and shine, it’s time for your medicine.”

“What medicine?”

“Oh, you know Miss Doris. It’s those two pills just like yesterday.”

“I don’t need pills. Take ‘em and leave,” Doris said. The nurse looked real surprised.

“Miss Doris, what’s the matter?

“Stupid colored,” Doris said. The nurse stopped smiling.

“Miss Doris, what would the doctor say if he knew you weren’t taking your pills?” The nurse was asking Doris in her no fooling around voice.

“The doctor can kiss my ass.” The nurse’s little face scrunched up when Doris said it. She looked at me like I would know what was going on. I sure didn’t.

“Should I leave,” I asked.

“No, I might need you,” the nurse said and left the room in a hurry. Doris looked at me.

“Who let you in,” she said to me, hollering.

“It’s me, honey. I’m Beverly,” I said. I was sitting next to her, my face almost cheek to cheek with hers.

“I don’t know a Beverly. Get out.” Doris was pushing herself up getting ready to sock me when the nurse came back with two muscle men. They grabbed her little arms and legs. Doris fought them awful hard. Squirming around like an animal escaping a heard of dogs, she knocked the nurse real good in the face. She cried a little, the nurse did. Then, with one final whipping around, Doris did herself in real good. I knew it as soon as I heard it. It was probably the worst sound I’d ever heard in my life. Something on Doris had popped.

Everyone stopped moving, even Doris and all her arms and legs. Then her little head fell back into the pillow and her mouth hung open real wide while she gargled some spit down her cheek and cried out at us. She kept screaming out the pain while the nurse, who was actually bleeding out her nose by then, ran to get some help. She came back with a doctor. The doctor was touching Doris all over trying to figure out what was broken. Then he touched her hip and Doris spasmed on the bed. I could see that she had pissed all over herself. The doctor told the nurse to get something. When she got back they yelled at me to help hold Doris down so the doctor could inject whatever the nurse got.

Doris wasn’t moving no more, but the doctor still put my hands on top of her chest. And as it turns out, doctors always know best because soon as Doris saw that needle she bucked at us. It threw up the smell of that piss into my face. She began hollering again, and all those people in the hall started to look in the room. That’s when I saw Beverly and her mamma. Glenn was holding Beverly close to her chest as I was pushing down on Doris’, her little bones felt like they could snap any time. Glenn was crying. I could see it for sure. If I could bet, I’d say Glenn didn’t see how close her mamma was to dying before right then.

~V~

Doris lived that day, bless the lord Jesus. She just couldn’t leave the bed no more. But it wasn’t much different than before, I guessed. The big difference was that before they could put Doris in a chair and wheel her around where now they couldn’t move her at all. To try to make it a little better, someone bought Doris her own music player. Every day after that player got there, Doris would be playing some Elvis. I wasn’t sure if there was any science to it or not, but that music was helping her condition. She never did have an episode with that music. Maybe it bonked some things back to their right place in her brain when it was playing.

Though them times was great for Doris, it was around that time that I was having some lows myself. Gonzo and me had been fighting again. It was always about stuff. There was never enough even when we had some for the both of us. So I was back out on the streets again, but I found that I couldn’t go to my normal spot. The cops had been sitting on up to recently. Since I didn’t have no desire to go back to jail, but the shakes were still getting me real bad, I was left making a hard choice in my life. I stole Doris’ player.

Doris was falling asleep when I stopped the Elvis. He was singing, “They’ll be so lonely baby. They’ll be so lonely they could die.” I should have known right then to put it back. I should have known god was telling me to listen, but I didn’t. I just tucked those discs in my underwear, wrapped the player in my jacket, and carried it out the place. That night I went to my guy and sold it for some stuff. I stayed out front of the Jack in Box that night as I wasn’t feeling like company after stealing from a dying woman. I had makeup down my face and smelled like French fries when I saw Doris’ nurse the next day.

“Luanne,” she said. “Can I talk to you?” She pulled me over. I was nervous she could see right through me; see where I’d been and what I’d done. “There’s something I need to talk over with you. As a volunteer, I need to make sure you feel comfortable. There has been a change in Doris’ condition. Before you go in there today, you should know that you might notice Doris looks a little different. It might be startling for you. You are still encouraged to go talk to her, but only if you feel comfortable with that.”

I wanted to say no, but there was something in my gut that told me I ought to go in there.

I opened the door. I could see Doris was lying in her bed like always, but her shirt was off for some reason I didn’t know. She breathed in hard and her little chest lifted up and when she breathed out it fell and I could see her ribs just like that day I held her down and felt them in my fingers. I sat down in a chair next to her and started to read a magazine. Doris looked at me as I read. She wasn’t speaking, so I thought maybe she couldn’t.

I would read a little and she would breathe in real deep. I would look at her every once in a while to make sure she was still breathing. She would look right back at me. Her eyes were all yellow and wet at the corners. Her mouth was wide open and as she breathed in she closed her eyes real tight. It must have hurt her. I stopped reading the magazine and grabbed her hand. A nurse came in to check on us. I told her everything was fine and she left. That’s when I started to talk to Doris.

“Doris, I saw your daughter the other day. You have a beautiful baby. Did you know that?”

She breathed in.

“I don’t have any babies, but if I do, I want mine to be as beautiful as that. Did you know that she married a lawyer? Real smart girl you have there.”

She breathed out.

“I know you like Elvis, Doris. I never really did like him. I’m guessing you must have been real young when he was first out. Did your parents ever let you see him? I hear he was a real show. It’s a shame what happened to him. So young and all.”

She breathed in.

“But that’s what drugs do to a person I guess. Do you know that I was a real good basketball player when I was young? I played for those teams that traveled around. It cost money and everything. That was before I dropped out of school. I was never real good with books. Or people. My mom died real early and it was hard for me.”

She breathed out.

“My pop tried, but it was hard on him too. We all felt real lonely for a while after that. Honest to god, it wasn’t ever the same with her gone. But I did alright. I take care of myself. Kind of. It’s been hard still to be real honest. Doris, is it okay if I tell you something?” I looked at her. Her eyes were still closed real tight and her mouth was still just as wide as before. I kept waiting for her to let me know it was okay; for her to breathe in just one last time. I kept waiting and listening, but nothing happened. Something inside me told me to get someone, to do something, but I was afraid to. I wanted so bad for her to be okay that I just kept talking. “Doris, I took your music.” I said, holding her hand tight in mine. My chest was shaking I was crying so hard. I could hardly get the words out as I choked on my own self. “I should never have took your Elvis, Doris. You poor woman. You smell like piss and all you can do is listen to your Elvis and I stole the damn thing. Now look at you.” I kept squeezing her hand and wheezing crazy. A nurse came in as I was rocking back and forth. She asked me if I was okay, but I just shouted over her. “Doris, you don’t deserve to die cause of me. What about your baby? Who’s going to be her mamma, Doris? And that poor little Beverly never knowing her grandma.” The nurse grabbed my shoulders and I sunk my face so deep into her neck that I couldn’t see nothing no more. The nurse took me out the room as I kept telling her that Doris didn’t deserve it. And the dirt of it all is that though she didn’t deserve it, she died anyway.

~V~

I always think about how it was me who said goodbye to Doris that day instead of Glenn and how it was my hands that held her as she passed. I think every day about what would have happened had I just listened to god when he told me to put that player back. I think about how sad it is that all that a person loves and does and knows comes down to sitting in your own piss and dying cause you ain’t got no Elvis. I think it was all them thoughts that lead me to do what I did that night, the night Doris died.

Most of these details was told to me by my lawyer and the police that filed the thing. However, I’m sure I did it. I’m sure I broke into that shop. I have scars on my arms now from the glass window I shattered. I must not have felt it I was so out of my mind. I’m sure I went through each of the aisles until I found what I was looking for. They told me I left blood all over, so it must be true. I’m sure I found the perfect one. It was the nicest player I had ever seen. They told me I even tested them all. Part of me remembers crying when I heard it play that disc. It was an Elvis disc, of course. I took the player and ran off, but I didn’t get very far cause I was bleeding a lot. Even still, I had a lot of fight in me when they finally caught up. I wasn’t just going to let them keep me from getting that player to her. I thought maybe god would forgive me if Doris could lie for all eternity with just a little bit of Elvis. But them son bitches didn’t let me go no matter how hard I tried. So Doris never did get her player.

Now I’m at county and this time they want to get me a bed. But that wouldn’t be so bad, would it? Maybe this time if I got a bed, if god was forgiving, I’d get the shakes until one day they’d be gone and maybe I’d be clean and do things different. Maybe I’d finally leave Gonzo and get a proper, honest to god, job. Maybe I would have some babies. I might even name one of them Beverley. And I think maybe I’d still work at that hospice doing service even though I didn’t have to. I think that if these things went right this time, maybe Doris would forgive me. So here’s to you Doris and here’s to changing everything I’ve done wrong. E*verybody in the whole cell block was dancin’ to the jailhouse rock*.