

About Her

A collection of female-driven short stories

By Priscila Santa Rosa

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LATE WORK

Clara is the only one left apart from her boss. One by one, her colleagues ducked out of from the view of his office and scurried away to the elevator. Some even had left their jackets on their chairs, hoping to fool the old fool. They didn't.

She's not here out of dutiful professionalism. This is her latest attempt in a series of failures in asking for a raise. Awkward, shy, and weird, Clara is not a social person. She's barely a people person. For her, to ask for a raise is as challenging as it is to believe she's worth one.

It's no wonder she spent the last five hours finding excuses to not talk to the man once and for all. Her latest is that she doesn't want to interrupt his work. She can intercept him on his way to the elevator instead. So, she sits tight and waits for her boss to leave.

It's almost midnight when Clara yawns. Her eyes are dry and it's way too late. Too late for a raise, too late to catch the train home, too late to stop a murder from happening a few feet away from her.

Shot from a silenced pistol, a bullet pierces her boss' head. Cotton from his chair mixes with hair, skull, and brain matter. His face falls on the keyboard, and blood flows between the letters. A career, gone. A failed marriage, forsaken. A child left behind. He's dead.

Seconds later and blissfully unaware of the tragedy, Clara cranks her neck above the sea of cubicles to peek into his office and gets a full view of the body.

She squints at the black hole between brain and hair, but it's the blood that makes her stand. It flows from the desk and drips onto the concrete ground, a pool already forming below his fancy ergonomic chair. If she could touch the red liquid, she would still feel its warmth. She can't. She's frozen. Panicking.

Yet one thing is clear: she's not alone. Her body moves before her brain can agree that's a good decision. While typing "911" on her phone, Clara runs toward the elevator. It rings before she presses the call button. She looks up from the phone screen.

Their gazes meet. He, inside the elevator and wearing black clothes and a black mask, and she, dumbly standing outside.

The hitman points a gun at her. In response, Clara draws what her brain thinks is her last breath. Her fingers let go of the phone — it cracks against the concrete floor.

She's dead, isn't she?

The elevator door closes before he can pull the trigger.

Clara can't feel her legs. She can't feel much of anything apart from pure, distilled fear. Gasping for air and balance, she reaches for her phone.

The screen is cracked beyond repair. It doesn't recognize her touch anymore.

The number on the elevator panel goes up again.

Clara dashes to the fire escape staircase, slamming its doors open. She jumps between steps as fast as her short legs allow her. Her lungs hurt, begging for air, for respite. Gasping, she stops three floors down. The echoes of her footsteps dissipate after a second. The light of each floor turns off. No movement.

She closes her eyes to remember things long forgotten.

Intelligence. Courage. Instinct.

And the fact that her smartphone has voice commands.

After gulping and building her voice back, she whispers, "Siri, call the police."

"Calling the police."

Siri's cold voice echoes around the dark staircases. The light, two floors up, turns on. His heavy, hurried steps sound close. Way too close.

Clara runs down, and down and again.

"Nine-one-one, what's —"

Looking down at the phone screen does her no favors. She trips.

In a flash, her body is in the ruthless hands of gravity. She feels a rib crack, but there's no air in her lungs to form a proper scream. Her right knee breaks against the hard end of a step. Clara's phone slips from her shaky grip, bouncing between steps and falling apart.

The door of the next floor painfully stops her fall. Limping, Clara throws her body against the door and stumbles inside another empty office.

Running hurts too much, so she hides between the maze of abandoned cubicles and under a desk. Legs against her chest and arms around them, she waits.

His footsteps are soft on the carpet floor, and the silent prowling makes everything worse.

The wait is unbearable. In fact, as she waits for her death, Clara realizes she hates waiting the most. She hates that waiting is all she has done during her short life. Waiting to be accepted, to be noticed, to be happy, to be fulfilled. The truth is, deep down, she waited for them as if wanting something was the same as deserving it. She should've done more. Risked more. All those clichés.

Black shoes and pants come into view just three desks away. Clara can even hear his calm and collected breathing. She covers her mouth with a hand and closes her eyes to the inevitable.

He takes his time as if he knows she's there already. As if he can hear her heart beating sweetly with fear. One step. Two steps.

A door slams open. A whistling janitor comes out from a nearby bathroom, earphones distracting him from real life and the real danger he's in.

The hitman pauses. In his eyes, she's a fawn with a broken leg. The janitor might be something else. He moves away. Clara doesn't cry for help. Instead, she crawls on all fours toward the elevator.

Behind her, the janitor faces his fate. One bullet to the head and another into his chest. The hitman turns around but his murdering rampage gives Clara time and the elevator doors open.

Clara punches the closing door button like a boxer during the final championship fight. His dark form whizzes by, but the doors close just in time.

Inside the protective metal box, Clara sobs, the sound of a man choking on his own blood clinging to her ears. Her knees and elbows are scrapped. Her hands shake, and her teeth clatter.

At times like these, the brain must make some adjustments to survive. Clara's mind transforms between deep breaths.

When the elevator reaches the ground floor, more bodies await her. She doesn't dare look at them, running to the front of the building instead. The door handles are locked shut by a metal chain.

No way out. For once, Clara won't hope or wait for anyone else. She goes back to the security desk. Eyes watering at their dead stares, she reaches for one of the guards' batons.

With her back against the wall, she stands next to the staircase doors. Her hair is soaked and glued to her face, fitting her animal-like grimace.

The doors open.

She swings the baton, putting every bit of hatred she feels in it. She hits right hand, and the pistol falls from his grip.

Her success is so unexpected that she stops moving. One second of hesitation is enough.

He punches her, hard. She falls on the wet floor, hands barely saving her face from a frontal collision.

Adrenaline long gone from her veins, Clara crawls away, vision blurry and courage drained. She doesn't feel the bullet breaking her skin, then her muscles, then bursting her heart.

FINAL CALL

They had found Diana. After years of hiding, of changing identities, and hopping from city to city, they had finally found her. She thought she had been careful. No friends. No lovers. No attachments. But the box was proof she had been careless. So careless she hadn't checked the windows before opening the door and had forgotten to take her gun out the moment the doorbell rang.

It was a simple wooden square, no bigger than a shoe box. She took it to the kitchen, placed on the table, and, with her arms crossed, stared at it for a long time. She had spent a long time running away from this exact moment, but now that it had arrived, Diana felt adrenaline running through her veins. A part of her wanted closure.

With a steady hand, she lifted the lid to find a cell phone. The second she picked the phone, it rang. Jaw tight, she strode toward the kitchen windows to yank the curtains close. She could picture the rifle scopes searching for a better angle.

Her house was already surrounded. Fine, let them come.

The phone kept ringing as she opened the cabinet below the sink and reached for the cold, hard grip of her hidden Glock pistol, along with an ammo box.

Armed, she finally answered the call, placing it on speaker.

"Diana. We need to talk."

His voice was the same, soft and sweet as honey. Without even realizing at first, Diana leaned closer to the phone. Of course, the agency would use *him* as bait. Too much history.

She swallowed her emotions back into the depths of her throat before saying, "So talk."

"They want you back. This is your last chance."

"I don't care what they want, Marcus." Just saying his name was painful, but she kept going, "I'm done killing people."

He sighed loudly. "You have three minutes before they storm the house and kill you."

“Three minutes? They are getting rusty.” She grabbed the ammo box. Glancing back and forth between the windows and her fingers, Diana loaded her gun. For the sake of closure, she decided to ask something she never would otherwise, “Why did you take this job, Marcus? To make sure I was dead? Is that it? Or are you just being the good soldier as usual? Did nothing change for you? All these years and nothing changed?”

Silence. As the seconds dragged on, she paused her work. Marcus always had the perfect answer for everything. Against her training and every instinct, she picked up after years on the job, her heart raced.

Finally, Marcus spoke, “I love you.”

She had heard her partner lie a thousand times in a thousand different ways. He wasn’t lying now, but why? To distract her. To stall for time until the strike team arrived. Yet, it made no difference. She had waited for those words most of her life.

Diana took a deep breath, then released a sigh. “You should’ve said that years ago.”

Another pause before he asked, “Do you love me?”

The vengeful part of her wanted to lie, to spit the vilest accusations and insults at the man who had betrayed her. They had been partners in everything until she asked him to choose between her or the agency. Country above anything else had been his answer.

“I love you, Marcus. You can say that at my funeral if that makes you feel better.”

He laughed. How that sound had made her heartbeat speed up once. She missed those days when it had been just the two of them against the world. Back when the world made sense.

In a surprisingly teasing tone, he said, “I’ve been waiting for you to say that since the Belgian job.”

She narrowed her eyes at his words. Of all their missions, that one was the least romantic they ever had. In fact, it had been particularly gruesome to investigate explosion sites for months. They had been searching for a vicious separatist with a talent for hiding bombs in the most ordinary of objects. Diana’s gaze fell on the wooden box.

“Still there, Diana?”

Where were the hurried footsteps crushing the grass on her backyard? Why couldn't she hear the fabric of uniforms grating against the bushes as the agency's goons approached? Why were they keeping their distance?

Diana reached for the box. A quick inspection revealed a false bottom, and below it, the bomb. Big enough to take out most of the house, but not enough to destroy the rest of the neighborhood. She had been right: Marcus' mission had been to distract her, but not for when the strike team arrived. The true goal was to give her no chance to fight back. The agency could use a gas leak to explain the explosion, and nobody would know the truth. But they had chosen the wrong bait.

"See you on the other side. Goodbye, Marcus," she whispered as her finger pressed the red circle.

In one minute, the bomb would give her all the closure she had wanted earlier. Good thing she only needed thirty seconds to escape.

Diana rushed to the basement door and ran down the stairs. She made a sharp left and used the momentum to slide and open a hatch, quickly falling into it. Water splashed under her feet once she landed on the ground. Using the phone to light her way, she followed the sewer system as the ceiling shook above her.

They met at their favorite bar. He ordered a glass of whiskey, neat. She drank a vodka martini.

"Did they follow you?" she asked.

"No. They trust me. After all, I just killed the woman I love." He lifted his glass with a wide grin. "Rest in peace, Diana. You're finally dead."

"And free." She smiled as they toasted to their new life.

DARLING HONEY DOLL

“Cheeseburger, fries, and a vanilla milkshake, Doll,” Taylor says with a smile.
“Can’t go wrong with the classics, right?”

The waitress giggles. “I’ll be right back with your food, sir.”

After she leaves, Veronica raises an eyebrow. “Doll?”

Taylor’s smile stays on. It’s the same charming one he once used on Veronica. “I don’t want spit in my milkshake, honey.”

“Right. Sure. I suppose that supermarket cashier was also going to spit in our groceries.”

He caresses her hand. “You know I love you, right, honey?”

Before she can answer, the waitress walks to their table and places the food on it, forcing the couple’s hands apart.

Taylor eats his meal one bite at a time, no rush, no worries. Veronica’s attention wanders around the diner. Finally, she stares at the bank across the street. Small. One security guard. No car or foot traffic this early in the morning.

“So, what do you think?” Taylor asks between bites.

“It’s doable.”

Her boyfriend nods with a smile, then goes back to chewing the last bits of his cheeseburger. The waitress sways her hips past their table. Taylor’s eyes travel up and down at her figure.

“Well, it’s doable if you didn’t flirt with every nice ass around town.”

He picks up a fry, dips it into the milkshake, then asks with a smirk, “Oh, so, you like her ass too?”

Veronica slams her palm against the table — his plate shakes. The gall. The cheek.
“Are you serious right now?”

“Well, honey bun, honesty is essential in any relationship. If you are attracted to her too, we can work something out.”

Her nostrils flare. “Not in a million years.”

“Hey, a man can dream.”

"I thought your dream was buying me a nice house."

"With a large bed, yeah."

Veronica glares at him, then raises her hand to call the waitress. The woman makes her way to the table.

"Darling, bring me some coffee, will you? Make it hot too." Veronica says to her.

"All right, ma'am." The woman nods at her before leaving.

Taylor leans right, a smirk on his smug face as he admires the woman's backside. Veronica narrows her eyes.

Once the waitress is out of earshot, Taylor turns to his girlfriend. "So. About the bank.

Veronica crosses her arms and raises an eyebrow. "You know what? I'm not feeling it.

"What"

The waitress arrives with the coffee. Veronica, eyes fixed on Taylor, accepts the cup.

"Thank you, doll," Veronica says to the woman. She takes a sip of the drink. "And it's really hot too."

Taylor has no time to jump out of the way before Veronica throws the coffee down. The dark, scorching liquid lands on his lap, and he screams. The waitress gasps and moves back.

Veronica stands, steps out of the booth, and smiles at the wide-eyed woman. "So, when does your shift ends, darling? I want to buy you a drink."

CAR TRIP

I roll down the window of the car to let the wind inside. Strands of hair tickle my cheeks as I extend my arm out and spread my fingers to feel the breeze running through them.

“Hey! Do you want to lose an arm?” Dad says, frowning.

“It just feels nice.”

“I bet jumping off a cliff feels nice at first too.”

“Okay, dramatic much?” I roll my eyes, but pull my arm back in and close the window. “The last car we saw was like three miles ago.”

Dad, with eyes fixed on the front, shakes his head. “You never know, honey. You never know.”

I sink into my seat with arms crossed. After a few seconds, I glance at my backpack on the backseat, tempted to reach for my phone.

“Nope. You promised, Hannah,” Dad says.

“You’re like a hawk today, Dad. I can’t blink without you noticing. What’s going on?”

He smiles one of his Dad-like smiles, the ones that have years of Dad-ness behind them. “I just want us to have some quality time together before I drop you off to college. You know, back in my day, there were no cell phones and—”

I groan. “Oh, my god, Dad. I know that.”

“I know you know that. What I’m saying is that—”

“If Mom had a cell phone, you guys would’ve never met. She got a flat tire, and you helped her out. It was love at first sight. I *know*.”

Dad sighs and focuses on the road. After a few minutes of heavy silence, I glance at him, only to find him frowning again. I bite my lip, looking down at my knees.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper.

He looks at me from the corner of his eye. “It’s fine.”

“I like that story. But I really, really miss my phone. I get cranky without it. Like Mom without—”

“—Without her coffee.” He smiles. I smile back. “But you still can’t have your phone.”

My smile fades. He laughs.

Having nothing to do with my hands, I fiddle with the radio, jumping between stations as soon I hear a second of music. I miss my playlist.

“Just pick one,” Dad says. “You don’t even hear what’s on properly.”

“I know what’s crap.”

“There. Stop there.”

I let go of the dial. It’s a country song. I reach for the dial again.

“Leave it. Come on, that’s a nice song for a road trip.”

“No, it’s not. I had, like, one hundred *actually* good songs for my trip to college on my phone. This... this is crap.”

“Give it a chance.”

“It has been thirty seconds, and it sounds exactly like all other country songs.”

“If you pay attention to...” he trails off. “Never mind.”

I frown at the tone of his voice and don’t change the station. A new song starts, and it’s another depressing one. Dad sings a few lines. I rest my head against the glass, a knot forming in my throat.

“You know I’m coming back to see you guys on the weekends, right?” I say, eyes on the rows of trees going past us. “It’s not that far.”

“That’s a lot of gas money. Who’s paying for that?”

“Ha. Ha.”

“Well, it’s true.”

I shake my head and look at him. “So, you’re saying you *don’t* want me to come back on the weekends?”

He adjusts himself on the seat, then grins. “I’m saying that maybe you might want to find a job to pay for all that gas.”

“Dad...”

He sighs. “You’re going to meet new people, Hannah. People who don’t like country music and you’ll all talk to each other on that damn phone even when you’re all sitting in the same room. Maybe the first weekend you get homesick. Maybe. Second one? Doubt it. And that’s okay. That’s why we’re doing this trip.”

“Without Mom.”

He clutches the wheel. “Well. That’s because...”

I wait for him to finish, but he doesn’t. Instead, he turns the blinker on. I sit straight to see him pulling into an old gas station with a rundown convenient store.

“I’m going to the bathroom,” he says while taking out a few dollar bills from his wallet. “Go buy something for us to eat.”

He disappears around the back of the store as I step out of the car. The store doesn’t have many healthy options, but I find an apple for him and buy a chocolate bar for myself. With the bar half in my mouth, I leave the store.

“She’s... fine,” I hear Dad’s trembling voice coming from around the corner. “No. I haven’t told her. I know. I know this was the whole point, but Martha... I don’t think I can do it. Maybe it’s for the best if she doesn’t know. I just want to enjoy this day, okay? At least we can have this day... Don’t cry, honey. We agreed, no crying, right?”

I blink. The chocolate bar slips out from my mouth and falls on the ground. I run back inside the store. The clerk asks if I’m all right. I shake my head, slowly. Without thinking, I walk around the aisles, aimless. I stop in front of a row of cereal. I look at the brand’s mascot, over-excited over a bowl of pure sugar.

Why would a tiger be so excited over cereal? It makes no sense.

“Honey?” Dad’s hand on my shoulder makes me jump. “Let’s go, Hannah.”

After taking a deep breath, I nod. “Okay, daddy. Let’s go.”

WHITE FIRE

On a winding road that cuts miles of woods in two, a red pickup truck makes its way to an unknown location. The driver, a young black man, spots a figure heading toward him on the side of the road. His instinct is to press the pedal, but his manners don't allow him to do so. Instead, the red pickup slows down enough so that they can meet halfway.

The figure waves. The pickup stops.

"Where are you heading to, sir?" the driver asks.

The man, as now the driver is close enough to see the angular shape of his face, the pasty white skin, the thin lips, and pointed nose, doesn't answer at first. Instead, the stranger looks up at the sky, where the full moon watches the scene with disinterest. He pulls down his hood and smiles.

"Nowhere in particular," the man answers.

"Then, what can I do for you?"

#

Bea sits on a bench, her feet up in the air as she reads a comic book. Flies hover around the porch light just above the front door, and crickets sing from the bushes. Nearby, the "Bed & Breakfast" sign sways with the night breeze.

The floorboards of the porch creak and whine. Bea's holds her comic tight but keeps her eyes on the panels. It's only when a shadow looms over that Bea finally dares to look.

Old Nana waits for her. Skeletal, she's dressed in a Sunday church white dress and her hair is neatly tied in a bun. Her face is covered by heavy makeup that does nothing to hide her age. When she blinks her eyes, the wrinkles around them move like waves of an ocean.

Bea knows her—has known her all her life despite them not being family at all. She sits straight on the bench and puts the comic away, waiting for the inevitable.

"Bea! Come inside now," her mother shouts from inside.

A strong gust of wind rocks the sign and Old Nana is gone. Bea rushes into her home and goes to the kitchen. Her mother navigates the tight, but cozy space with ease. Upon hearing Bea's arrival, she waves at her.

"Dinner won't be ready for a few minutes yet. Go wash your hands."

"All right, mamma."

Bea runs to the bathroom, but Old Nana blocks the door. She points at her.

"Come closer, child. I need to see you better."

Bea, with her arms straight and close to her body, steps forward.

"Listen, child." She grabs Bea's cheeks and squeezes them until she feels her teeth. "A man is coming. He'll have no luggage nor company. But he'll smile at you. And when he does, his teeth will show, and you'll know what needs to be done."

Bea shakes her head. "Mamma told me I shouldn't listen to you. That you aren't real."

The old woman smiles. "But you know better, don't you?"

Bea blinks, looks down, but finally, nods.

"Good girl." Her smile disappears. "Now listen, this man has evil in his eyes, child, and fire in his mind. He hates you and your mother. He hates that you live here in his land, in his domain."

"But this is our home."

Old Nana closes her eyes then lifts Bea's chin with a skeletal finger. "He does not see it this way, and no talk will convince him otherwise. He'll burn this house and drag you by your nappy braids to that tall tree in the backyard."

Bea's eyes swell with tears. "No! Mamma won't let him."

"She'll be dead by then."

"Stop it! You're lying! Stop it!"

Bea shakes her head over and over, eyes closed. She screams and stomps her feet over and over until she feels her mother's touch, hugging her tight. Old Nana is gone again.

"What is it? Why are you crying?" her mother asks, holding Bea's shoulders.

Afraid of her mother's reaction, Bea says nothing. She wasn't supposed to listen to Old Nana no more. Her mother takes Bea to bed. She kisses her on the forehead and pulls the covers, whispering she'll bring food later.

The window shutters swing back and forth as the wind becomes stronger and a storm threatens to fall. Old Nana stands by the curtains, a bony finger pointing to the outside.

On the tip of her toes, Bea walks to the window and climbs onto its sill.

She sees a red pickup truck pull up on the yard and park. A few seconds later, her mother comes out of the house and greets the driver. A hooded figure gets out of the truck, and they walk inside.

Bea turns to Old Nana, who nods.

Heart racing, she rushes to the kitchen, only to stop by the doorway, clinging to the frame. The hooded man sits at the table while her mother prepares a plate.

“You’ll pay rent every day,” her mother begins.

“I will.”

She offers him the plate. “Where’s your luggage?”

He pulls his hood down, and his white hand reaches for the food. “No luggage, ma’am. Got robbed coming here.”

Her mother raises an eyebrow. “But you have money to pay me?”

“Hid it in my boot, I did.” He takes off his right boot, and a few dollar bills fall from it.

“All right.”

Satisfied, her mother goes back to cooking. Bea risks poking her head in but draws the attention of the man, who turns around. He gives Bea a broad smile that shows his bright, white teeth. His canines are sharp and long.

Bea recoils, and the hairs on the back of her neck stand. She spins around and runs up the stairs. Waiting by her mother’s bedroom door is Old Nana. She nods at Bea. The locked door clicks and opens. Bea follows the old spirit inside.

Old Nana points at one of her mother’s nightstand drawers. Bea opens it. Inside, she finds a pistol. With skeletal fingers caressing her hair, Bea grabs the gun.

That night, she kills a man.

DEATH IN THE KITCHEN

One night, Death visits my mother. She opens the backdoor and lets him into the kitchen. It's raining outside, and lightning strikes just as he takes off his long, black cloak and gives it to her. He's white as bones and skinny. With long, thin fingers, he fills a cup with water and then sits down at the table. Mother sits next to him and starts mending his cloak as she had done many times before.

I watch from behind the doorframe as they whisper to each other. Sometimes, Mother cries, a hand over her mouth. I want to step into the kitchen and console her, but the tall figure near her is too frightening. The spot he occupies is dark as if a storm cloud had followed him in.

Death doesn't come often, but I always know when he's nearby. The house feels colder. Mother becomes distant. She forgets I'm even in the same room, looking at the window with vacant eyes. As he approaches, always after sunset, she tells me to go back to my room and not come out until she says so.

When I was little, I would hide in the corner, knees pressed against my chest, and wait. I'm bigger now and not so stupid. I know Death doesn't visit other kid's homes. We're different. Our family is different. I'm reminded of that every day at school as I walk by, and everyone steps away, whispering between fingers. Unlike them, I have no father. Unlike them, I never met him.

A shadow looms over me. I raise my head and find Mother looking down, her eyebrows raised. "Go back to your room, Bonnie. Now."

She grabs my arm and yanks me upstairs. Outside, branches hit the window of my bedroom as the wind blows.

"You stay there and stay quiet." Her voice is thick with an emotion I don't recognize.

"Who is he?" I ask, heart racing for an answer.

For a second, she hesitates. For a second, I think I'll finally know for sure. Then she slams the door, and I'm left alone. A few seconds later, I hear their voices. Death is still inside the house. Did he take my father away? He must have. He's the reason

Mother cries almost every day. He's why people look at us with suspicion when we go to the grocery store.

The voices die out. I wait until I hear footsteps going toward her bedroom before sneaking out to the hallway and tiptoeing my way down the stairs. The kitchen lights are out. Death's cloak still hangs on the back of a chair. With trembling hands, I reach for it. It smells like bleach and burnt hair. My fingers trace dark round holes Mother hasn't fixed yet. The fabric feels rough and beaten. Most of all, it feels real.

The distant sound of police sirens attracts my attention, but I freeze when heavy footsteps come from behind me. A white, bony hand snatches the cloak from my grasp. I turn around to see a pair of black pants. I look up only to find the nostrils of his long nose. He's way taller than Mother.

"Sorry," I squeal.

He looks down with pity in his eyes and places a single finger against his thin lips.

I nod fast, stepping away from his dark form. He puts on the cloak and marches to the door, but before he leaves, I find my bravery.

"Did you kill my father?" I whisper. "Did you?"

His fingers stay around the door knob as he glances back. The sirens grow louder and louder as I wait for him to punish me for being disrespectful. Instead he sighs, stares at the floor, then steps out, slamming the door shut behind him.

Weeks, then months pass and Death doesn't come back. Mother doesn't talk about it, and neither do I, but the memory of his last visit lingers between us. I picture his long nose and fingers, his sad eyes and pale, sickly skin over and over in my mind. I don't want to forget the creature responsible for our misery.

Yet as I grow older, and Mother finds joy again, I begin to let go. We spend more time together, building affection where once there was only silence. Eventually, the memory of those rainy nights fades even as I catch a glimpse of his long nose and lanky form in the mirror.

It takes years before Death visits me again. He stands on the front porch, carrying a suitcase and wearing a Homburg hat that hides most of his gray hair. He nods. I nod.

"Come in," I say with an emotion I can't quite understand in my throat. "She's waiting."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Priscila Santa Rosa is the author of four novels about young adults finding love, hope, and friendship while surviving those pesky zombie apocalypses. A jack of all trades, she also writes scripts and short stories, and worked as graphic designer. In 2017, she moved from Brazil to Florida to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Full Sail University. A geek, gamer, and overall grumpy introvert, she loves fantastical worlds, horrifying creatures, and weirdly lovable characters. She can be contacted at [@priscilassr](https://twitter.com/priscilassr) and www.priscilarosa.com.

Other works by Priscila Santa Rosa:

Those Who Remain - Book 1

Those Who Remain - Book 2

Those Who Remain - Book 3

Deadly Hearts