

Corner Deli

by Anson Pope

She would watch me walk past three houses to the corner deli. My grandmother. A deli on a street filled with beautiful old Victorians. That was when I was barely 10. She'd watch every step there and each back to make sure no one abducted me I suppose.

When I announced we were engaged she was not pleased. "This is a mistake," my grandfather would declare. He spoke for both of them.

"How will I know it is unless I try?" My answer was unexpected. So young in years, yet so old in mind.

They came to the wedding. I don't recall saying anything to them or them to me. My mother would grab my arm at the end of the night to announce that they were leaving and they didn't say a proper good-bye. When did they become so uncouth? My uncle once claimed my family was "classy."

Five years later I would sit in my grandparents' living room. Not the old Victorian, but a simple townhouse in the middle of nowhere. My aunts and uncles, all disciples of this warped mentality would surround me as I said good-bye to my grandfather. He was so small and delicate. Not the man I knew. All the oddness that developed erased. A family once more.

My alarm did not wake me. I just opened my eyes. My flight to Miami was in less than two hours. I never set the alarm. Lunch and dinner under the palms bookended by sleeping in my bed in a span of less than 24 hours. Needless to say I crashed after the experience.

I woke in the early evening and saw that my mother had called several times. She left a message saying to call and she sounded strange.

"My mother died," she said. I think she phrased it like this because she knew that to me my grandmother had died long ago. She died when the caring woman who watched my every step to the corner vanished.

The dysfunctional ones allowed us to go to the funeral home to say good-bye. No wake, no funeral, no burial. My grandmother had come to realize that her streak of mean would end in her demise. She would go out quietly, so as to take the negativity with her. She wasn't even in a casket. Two body bags, strapped to a medical stretcher, a block of Styrofoam propping her head up. Her mouth agape, her eyes open. It looked as if the emotional pain she inflicted had poisoned her corpse.

Maybe the evil went with her. Maybe peace was true. Maybe she would still watch my every step to the corner and back and once again be the woman I loved.

