

Broadway Joe Death Bed

by Chris Okum

Come here. Don't be afraid. I'm not dead. Yet. I'm just dying. That's all. No big deal. I'm not scared. This is what it is. At the end. Of the day. To be dying. You'll be like this. Some day. If you're lucky. This is the kind of death. You hope. There are worse. Car accident. Or to choke. On an artichoke. Or shot. In the face. While you're trying not to choke. On an artichoke. So. If everything goes right for you. One day. Lying here. Just like me. Like me. Waiting. To die. Waiting. For your nurse. To kill you. Because that's what they do. Nurses. They kill. Me. And you. In drips. And drabs. It doesn't seem like it. But they are. They're killing you. They are. Angels. Death angels. Nurses. They give it to you. An overdose. In slow motion. I love slow motion. Watching my release. In slow motion. My release. The fastest. Ever. Now I'm going to die. Of an overdose. Just like everyone. No one dies from death. Not anymore. Now you die like a junkie. There were junkies. Everywhere. When I played. In New York. For the J-E-T-S. Jets. Jets. Jets. Those men. In the street. On the sidewalk. I'd step over them. In my fur coat. I miss it. The fur coat. And the junkies. A little. What a time. To be a quarterback. And a junkie. Now I'm the junkie. And one day you. You'll be a junkie. But not now. At the end. The end of the day. You won't have a choice. If you're lucky. I was lucky. So lucky. Raquel Welch. I could tell you stories. Make your toes sweat. I miss sweaty toes. My toes don't sweat. Not anymore. Now they're cold. I think. I can't feel my toes. But this isn't it. What I want to tell you. The dying are supposed to tell. Something. Lessons. Wisdom. What they've learned. Especially to you. My grandson. But I don't have any. Wisdom. But I do have something. To tell you. About me. When I was a young. Like you. In Alabama. In school. High school. There was a boy. Like you. Barry Miller. I used to make fun of him. We all used to. There was a group. Us. Jocks. They used to call us. We were the jocks. And Barry Miller. He was. What would you call him. A nerd. A dork. A wimp. He was a wimp. So small. Funny hair. Pencils in pocket. The whole shebang.

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Weird shoes. Strange pants. Always reading. A book. In his face. Right in the book. Wore thick glasses. With the white tape. On my cleats. God. I miss white tape. And Barry had the same tape. But on his glasses. And the pencils. In his pocket. He was smart. A student. Just like you. Quiet. And we made fun of him. Did the things we were supposed to. Gave him atomic wedgies. Stuffed him in lockers. Dumped him in trash cans. Mashed potatoes in his hair. Shot spitballs at his face. Threw him down stairs. Tackled him in the halls. And he took it. All of it. Never said a word. Never cried. Or whined. Or told on us. Or asked us to stop. He would just look at us. With a look. Like he didn't care. Like we weren't there. Or like we were. Like bugs. Like he was different than us. That was his look. Always. He looked at everyone like this. Like he didn't really understand. Or want to. Maybe that was it. That's what bothered me. But still. So. I felt guilty. For what I did. All these years. I wanted to talk to Barry Miller. Say I'm sorry. For what I did. But now. No. I'm not. Not anymore. Now I can see. All around. These people. They remind me. Of Barry Miller. Barry Miller. The nerd. In charge. Like you. And he shouldn't be. That's why we did it. What we did. Because we knew. When you're young you can tell. There was something wrong. With Barry Miller. With that look. It meant something. What it meant. We had the right. What's the word. Instincts. He needed to be stopped. That's what we trying to do. We were trying. To stop him. And you. Just like you. My grandson. But we couldn't. From what you want to do. To destroy. Everything. And everyone. Because you hate. All you do. So what do you want. I can see. Your eyes. You have his eyes. Barry Miller. I want you to know. I know. I know you. And what you want. That look. That's why. It was up to us. The jocks. That's what. What we were for. To stop you. All of you. Because you will. One day. But you won't. Because of us. There are more. Of us. The jocks. And we will. We will. We will rise. Again. Up. Against you. You must be stopped. What are you doing. Don't. Don't call. The nurse. I'm not ready. Not yet. Like a junkie. And Raquel Welch. And sweaty toes. Just going to take it. One game. At a time. At the end. Of the day.

