

Stop

by Jake Barnes

I called and asked him how it went. Oh, he said, about as well as you could expect.

The dead girl was his niece's daughter. Only thirteen years old.

Lots of people at the funeral, he said. More than a thousand.

That surprised me. There couldn't be more than five thousand in the whole town. And that would be adding in the much smaller town on the outskirts.

I asked how his niece was holding up. Going through the motions, he said. I knew the story. Prominent family. Owned a bank. The niece, his brother's daughter, became president when her father stepped down.

A troubled family. Alcoholic father and mother. The niece who lost the child was married to a hopeless alcoholic. The niece had a lover. A woman.

The daughter, the niece's child, had hung herself in an upstairs closet in the old house. My friend said she had done a good job of it, too. Didn't leave a single thing to chance.

I didn't ask him *why* she killed herself. I was pretty sure I could answer that question myself.

