

Rot

by Laura Ellen Scott

By way of introduction, I should tell you that when I was seven, my father took me and my little brother, Phil, on a car ride at 3 in the morning. We drove for hours and hours, stopping only for pop and potty. The next day, policemen took my Dad away when we pulled in for gas, and Phil and I went to live with strangers, separately, forever. Years later, I learned that Mom's body had been in the trunk the whole time. My only memory of that night was the thrill of being out so late. They kept asking, but I didn't remember a fight. Philly remembered nothing at all.

I am the most death-filled person I know, which makes me an ideal political operative. I can say no without looking back; saying yes makes me cramp up. My first wife said I had a rictus smile.

As Senior Aide to the City Manager of New Persia, Pennsylvania, I pledge to attend any and all funeral events. Also, I will give speeches to unpopular constituencies, such as the Sons of Confederate Bastards or the Association of Small Hardware Purchase Agents. I have three excellent suits, and I have no fear of small aircraft travel.

I loved my Dad. He was executed in 1967. He was guilty.

Currently I am married to my second wife, and we have two indistinguishable adolescent sons. They are possessed of jackal lust and hunger, and we plan to send them away for secondary school. They are eager to go.

I am screwing my assistant, Helen, whose seventeen-year-old daughter is unbalanced enough to have a "thing" for me, but even if she didn't, I would still break it off by May as I have come to the conclusion that screwing people's mothers is no longer practical. People's mothers have grown savvy in these Lifetime-channel years and are no longer the needy pushovers they once were.

Murderers' kids are put up for adoption, their records sealed. I learned that social workers refer to us as 'Charlie's kids,' after Charles Manson. All the kids from the Manson family, from the

Spahn ranch, they were adopted out. Raised by unsuspecting strangers.

My next affair will be with a younger woman, not because I need firmer flesh, but because I need a place to park. I WILL NOT go after Helen's idiot daughter, Daisy. I will not do this. She is too full of life, even if she worships death and fantasizes about suicide.

Philly's dead now too. You don't want to know.

The daughter, the one I'm thinking of, she looks like a hooker clown. Black vinyl boots, shock red hair, grossly colored polyester shirts and skirts stretched over her hormone-pumped body. Militant and plump. Helen's other daughter, the prom queen, she gives it up to any nice boy who asks politely or any mean boy who grabs at it. She's a much better choice, but I don't believe she cares for me.

I look like hell. And not just today, I always do. Gray skin, pockmarked cheeks. Long, bony nose. I'm scrawny, bent like a beat-up umbrella. I've never worn shorts in my life. I still get lucky though. Women are dumb. Always thinking that they can put color in my cheek, a smile on my thin lips. Always thinking I can be soothed by blessed salvation pussy.

Nice thought, dumb thought. As I've grown older--and colder--I've become irresistible.

Something wrong with Daisy. For all her drama and Halloween talk, she's so weak. The slightest disappointment freezes her face.

Dad's Monte Carlo was a blue shark swimming through starlight.

There will be expensive therapy, certainly drug treatment. There will be controversy over whether she is bipolar or mildly schizophrenic, resulting in years of under and over medication. Maybe even hospitalization. She will never get completely healthy, just older, more tired, less intense. At some point she will turn to God. Some years later, she'll turn away again.

There are no innocents, only incompetents.

Maybe by age 40 her meds will stabilize, and she'll have that watery shake in her gaze that says she is "rehabilitated."

I can just see her bleeding out in a bathtub in the hotel room. Maybe only a year from now.

This possible future is the only flaw in our plan, sir. Otherwise you will find that I am an excellent counsel, clever and fearless, your wingman.

The beams from other cars washed past in the night, and it was magical. My brother fell asleep as soon as we'd hit the highway proper. Yellow kitchens, yellow kitchen lights in the fast black night. "We're going for a ride," my old man said, and we piled into the car, still in pajamas. We didn't ask any questions. It was Dad. And it was great.

This is my only secret from the past. That I loved my father, and death doesn't bother me as much as it should.

The future is something else. But there's no reason we can't prepare.

At your will.

