

# Telling

written by Guest Contributor | July 12, 2019



Image Credit: [Dev Murphy](#)

My mother called me last week to tell me she had dreamed of her sister Christy's trip to the hospital before it happened. Minor illness. In the same week, her sister Elizabeth broke her arm, my younger sister Tara totaled her car, and you found out you were dying of a brain tumor.

These things were not foretold.

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How dare I foretell my grandmother's death in a dream, but not yours! My mother foretold my father's best friend's accident, my aunt foretold the Las Vegas massacre—but you were not foretold. If I had dreamed of you I could have plucked the tumor away in my pincers and swallowed it.

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When my mother dreamed of Jeff's fall we brought him a parachute and told him to wear it at all times. He walked around the house with it trailing behind him. And lo, he dove drunk from a very great height into a swimming pool with nothing in it, and the parachute caught him! The cabin in the woods smelling of stale medicine and unwashedness, the dusty collection of Led Zeppelin

records, the nurse standing guard by his wheelchair, the death due to complications from the fall—these futures did not come to pass, thanks to my mother's parlor tricks.

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When my aunt dreamed of the Eiffel Tower and a voice saying *the deadliest one yet* she woke up in the night and flew to Las Vegas. Stalked the hotel for the man who the Lord would tell her was The One. She told him "I have dreamed this all! It is not the will of the Lord!" and the man left that hotel and lo, everyone was saved.

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What difference does it make if we are given dreams or none at all? We know we will die one day. The CAT scan and the stethoscope, diagrams of tumored brains on Wikipedia—these are our signs and magics. What good are these lights? Wouldn't we rather not see the lion before he comes to devour us? our friends?

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I saw the demons in my friend Kara's house in eleventh grade, and when our friend Matt died of cancer (Always cancer! Was Matt a prophecy himself? But how could I know?) she believed the demon in her house was Matt's ghost. She called him her guardian angel and I felt sick to my stomach. But who am I to say it wasn't a demon? Because I had my feelings? I did not dream of it.

My Aunt Becky told me that the ability to sense these things is a sign of godliness. "It's in our blood. You have been put there," she said, "to help your friend see the light, to protect her." And so I told Kara about the demon in her house and she believed me and she told her parents and they believed her and they all moved far away, and I lit a match in the night and carried it all the way to Kara's old house and set it ablaze, so that nobody else would be haunted.

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I ask my mother what difference it makes, foretelling these things. My aunt could not stop the Las Vegas shooting. My mother could not save Jeff. We did not foresee a brain tumor, and a brain tumor anyway is not a bullet you can stand in front of or a parachute carrying you to the bottom of the pool.

"I don't know why," she says. "I believe it is to remind us we are not in control. To remind us that God exists, that he is showing us the plan.

"And someday, maybe, when we have learned to trust ourselves enough, we *will* have a prophecy that we can do something about."

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Kara and I are not friends anymore—grew apart, different paths. I don't know if she still speaks with the presence in her house. She might have become possessed by it, or perhaps it was Matt all along and he wonders why I do not speak to him.

I do not go to church anymore. I hold my onionskin hands up to the sun and nothing shines through. What is meant to shine through, anyway? You and I are sitting in a bar in helpless silence while "Don't Fear the Reaper" plays overhead.

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Our friend Julie tells me that you are pushing her away, here, at the end of it all. That I am being kept closer. I tell her there must be a need—a need to make your world smaller. Is this a version of a prophecy? The being allowed to see what others are not seeing? The being kept closer than others?

But did my Aunt Becky enjoy seeing the Las Vegas massacre twice? Seeing the end before it was the end, and being alone or very nearly alone in her sight: the torture of solitary helplessness.

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Every day that I am with you, as your end comes nearer, I am prophesying your death, I am knowing your disappearance. I am seeing you go, grow smaller, and I can do nothing. You're getting tired and tired and your nights are becoming longer than your days. Your nights will eventually swallow you. My chest aches hourly with the panic of it.

I bear the foreknowledge of your death, and I use it to send you links to songs I think you might enjoy. I bear the foreknowledge of your death, and I use it to smother you, to stand too far back, to make my chest hurt, to quit my job, to tell the night custodian I worry for your soul, to not tell you that, to tell you only that I love you, I love you.

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We are stuck in the same day repeated over and over again, the dread of remembering each morning that you are dying. But these repeated days are staggering, staccatoing to a rapid close. An hourglass with every grain of sand the same the same the same, but quickly running out.

There is no sense to any of this.

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