

Obituary 03: Isaiah Died

**Obituary Writer (Voiceover):** Greetings. I am the modestly handsome Obituary Writer of this fetching town of Crestfall, Idaho, and this is *Death by Dying*.

[*epic choir music*]

The ceiling on the Church of Right Here Right Now is at once beautiful and underwhelming. A disturbingly-handsome Albanian man arrived in town with a vision: he would paint a neo-futurist depiction of The Great Flood using monochrome pastels. When you look up from the pews, you are mesmerized by the swirling, raging waters, animals scattered in every direction. On the edges of the painting are fishermen casting lines, hoping to catch something to take home for Sunday dinner. It was meant to be a commentary on something, but no one is quite sure on what.

But alas – the disturbingly-handsome Albanian man never finished his work. He fell in love, you see, with the incredibly wealthy Lady Yolonda Wickersham, and the two skipped town together. And so he left without ever having drawn the Ark. So it's just sort of... a bunch of drowning animals, I suppose. But it feels like a metaphor for something bigger. A stormy sea and some animals that are having a bad day. Pastor Jeff was having a bad day. And it was last week that he came before the devout churchgoers to tell them all about it.

[*organ music*]

**Pastor Jeff:** I'm, ah, having a really bad day. I'm just gonna get this out there. I guess. For one, for starters, I have an avocado I'm growing to make guacamole, but: It died. So that was ah, that was a negative. I was walking out of my house, and I was carrying my yogurt that I was having for breakfast, and it spilled all over the cement. And I felt really sad. But on top of it, the yogurt will just be there on the sidewalk for like a couple weeks. And I'll have to see it, and it'll be a reminder of one of my failures. And then from there I went out to my, ah, suitably-priced mid-sized sedan, and there was a ding on the headlight and I was upset about that. But then, ah, YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS, afterwards I was expressing my feelings about the way things were going, and I hurt my knee. Won't be doing any frisbee golf this weekend now. But on top of this also! I have new drapes! And I don't like them... Oh! And Isaiah Goodwin, I found him this morning *dead in his chambers*. So now I have to write a sermon and that's gonna take time. (*exasperated sigh*) Well, welcome to church.

**OW VO:** This is an obituary of Elder Isaiah Goodwin.

[*typewriter keys, the bell dings, the carriage slides*]

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** Isaiah Goodwin, 98, was a long-dedicated member of the clergy, and the head of the Kick-the-Bucket Committee. The Church likes to be on top of things when someone dies, prepared immediately with flowers and scrapbooks and customized sermons, so the Kick-the-Bucket Committee keeps track of everyone's age, health, habits, and genetic dispositions to determine when they are most likely to pass the final wind. They are almost always entirely wrong. An instance in which they were most definitely wrong was the case of Elder Goodwin's wife, Margaret, who died after an unexpected accident involving a frying pan and a glass of orange juice.

*[clang! sizzle]*

**Margaret:** AHHH!

**OW VO:** She never did get enough Vitamin D. It was after this exceptionally unfortunate affair that Elder Goodwin found himself in a grief support group held in the Church basement. The group was run by two sisters of the Church, who never spoke, which made communication a mute point. They instead nodded and gestured calmly, which was enough to set the group alight with monologues of woe. A boyfriend run over by his own lawnmower. A daughter who vanished into the Dark Woods, never to return. A friendly hobo who was attacked late in the night by a pack of three man-eating cats...

*[meow, meow, meow]*

... which I have absolutely no further information about. Absolutely no knowledge to provide whatsoever. My three cats were at home with *me* that night. Geraldine Portage recently joined the group as well, whose husband finally awoke from a coma, which had caused far more grief than if he had just died already. Bare in mind this was a marriage held together by mutual animosity. These people loved to fight and they would not leave each other because they wanted to be there when the other person died so they could look down and say "I told you! I told you this would happen." Geraldine had waited for this moment, and now, well, saying she was disappointed would be an understatement. Grief will find us where it will.

When Elder Goodwin passed, a spot opened up in the support group, and the spot was promptly filled by Charlotte Dawson, whose aunt recently bled to death due to a paper cut, and was subsequently eaten by three man-eating cats, which I again, have no knowledge of. Charlotte and I have become friends. I have a friend.

*[friendship theme - a marvelous, carefree tune]*

I don't mean to bore you with the details, but she is a delightful human being with wit and a surprisingly deep understanding of squirrel migration patterns. We talk about current events and the recent Mud Storms. I tell her about the process of Rigor Mortis and she updates me on her newest walrus haikus.

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

*[waves, seagulls, a pleasant beach]*

*[operatic walrus singing in the background]*

**Charlotte:**

*Furious dawn*

*A begrudging walrus sings  
at a winged sponge.*

*[abrupt cut in music]*

**OW VO:** Back to the death of Isaiah Goodwin. He was found in his private quarters, face-first in his Bible – a fact many members of the Church of Right Here Right Now found *inspiring*. The Bible was open to the Books of Kings, in which Elder Goodwin had circled a single verse: “Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.” Elder Goodwin was drained of all color, more pale than the Angel of Death, which is impressive. The Angel of Death is remarkably pale. Her skin has the undertones of a snowman made of coconut meat. His lips were a deep, deep purple. He grimaced as though death had been a bad move.

*[old man groaning that does not sound healthy at all]*

The nights preceding his dismal end were filled with dreadful moans coming from his chambers, according to the clergy. Through the night he would not sleep, or so it sounded. Grumbling, wretched groans... but no one really thought anything of it because he had a fondness for creature features.

*[monster growl]*

His death had come as a surprise to all who knew him, however. The grief support group had done wonders, and until recently, he was considered to be one of the cheeriest 98-year-olds around. He got rid of the body pillow of his wife. He started singing in the shower again, much to the delight and dismay of the others who lived in the Church. His favorite song was called “Two Lovebirds,” by Crestfall’s very own: The Bally-Go-Backward Boys.

*[the song begins, folksy, with barbershop quartet backup singers]*

Lyrics:

*I’m looking for a girl*

*[He’s looking for a girl]*

*A girl who’s just for me*

*[A girl who’s just for him]*

*And we’ll live happily until the day we die...*

*And become worm food...*

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

*Lyrics:*

*Just two lovebirds*

*[Just two lovebirds]*

*Yes we'll be food for the birds*

*[Cause we were eaten by worms]*

*There are no words when you've been eaten by worms*

*And subsequently by birds.*

**OW VO:** But everything changed when Elder Goodwin left the support group. His youthful sprightliness withered, his muscles ached, his ankles clicked when he walked. I decided to pay the grief support group a visit. The Church basement is cavernous. It smells as though bananas used to be there but no longer are. There was a single light as I entered the room, and the rest of the room receded into utter darkness. Within the haloed bubble of the light sat ten members, each with a story to tell. At the front of the group were the two silent nuns. They were wearing habits that perfectly blended in with the stretching darkness behind them so they appeared to be merely two floating heads. They turned to me simultaneously as I entered the room, and they smiled peacefully. I was struck immediately by the upbeat attitude of the group. The voices of the members were practically giggly. I don't throw the word "giggly" around like some mid-life crisis poet trying to find himself in the mountains with a flock of sheep. "Giggly" is serious business. Everyone spoke of their traumatic experiences like they were talking about something funny that had happened to them at the grocery store. Even Charlotte seemed as though she didn't have a care in the world.

**Charlotte:** *(extremely perky)* Y'know, every time I close my eyes, I just see the face of my aunt's cold, lifeless corpse, hahaha, so weird, right? Only one person in the group was genuinely upset, on the verge of tears, as she spoke of her boyfriend's troubling lawnmower accident.

**Girl:** Can I just have a chance to speak, oh my god. *(sniffle)* He always loved mowing the grass... He almost loved it too much. It was kind of weird. Honestly he spent more time on his lawn than with me.

**OW VO:** The nuns reached out their hands to the girl, and dismissed the rest of the group with a soft nod. The girl gravitated towards them, taking their hands, and the sisters guided her into the dark recesses of the room. I called after them.

**OW:** Excuse me! Where are you taking her?

**OW VO:** The silent nuns turned to me and had this to say.

**Silent Nuns:** *(complete silence)*

**OW VO:** Well, I'm not exactly sure what they said, but it was very well put. And with that, they disappeared into the black abyss of the cave-like room.

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

*[footsteps racing to keep up]*

**OW:** Charlotte, wait up!

**Charlotte:** Oh hey!

**OW:** Are you alright?

**Charlotte:** Never better. I feel like I just woke up from a dream where it was raining peaches.

**OW:** Is that a good thing?

**Charlotte:** Absolutely posi-toot-ly!

**OW:** What about your aunt?

**Charlotte:** *(almost laughing)* You know, it's the funniest thing, I used to feel like the world was a darker place without Aunt Lillian and I didn't know how to keep on living because she was the only person I had growing up because my parents abandoned me, but none of that feels like it matters anymore, you know what I mean?

**OW:** Not really...

**Charlotte:** The sisters are wonderful. They took me into a place of utter darkness and whispered unintelligible things into my ears and now everything is peachy-keen!

**OW:** You have a weird thing about peaches.

**Charlotte:** Anyhoozle, I'll catch you later, alright?

**OW VO:** Crestfall Law Enforcement stopped by to pick up a book on dating advice from the Church gift shop. Crestfall Law Enforcement was informed by the cashier that Elder Isaiah Goodwin had died that morning, and the Butcher had taken the body for examination. Crestfall Law Enforcement grumbled, nodded stiffly, and walked away without paying.

Meanwhile, the Butcher has been running a tight ship ever since he took over the duties of town coroner. He blocked the entrance of Elder Goodwin's private quarters with masking tape because he couldn't find any crime scene tape. He wouldn't let anyone in, not even yours truly, THE Obituary Writer, who certainly should have first dibs on a crime scene. He took Elder Goodwin to the back of his butcher shop and got to work, slicin' and dicin'.

*[shhhiiiiinnnggg! out comes the knife, gross gut-slicing sounds]*

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** He sniffed every organ and took notes. He licked Elder Goodwin's lips and spat on the floor.

[*spitting*]

**Butcher:** Pff! Uch! Poison! Oh, gross! ... Has a lemony aftertaste, but still, it's poison, ach!

**OW VO:** A deacon, poisoned at the age of 98... There was only one person to talk about this matter with – our dear friend Pastor Jeff.

[*diner sounds, clinking silverware, chatter*]

**OW VO:** About two months ago, Pastor Jeff was sitting at a window-side booth in the Siren's Diner. He was enjoying a full plate of eggs over-easy, hashbrowns of course, coffee please and thank you, and some delicious, delicious sausage made from a recently-deceased farmer's goat... or at least the two goats that the Butcher was not entirely keen on. In any case, he was thoughtfully eating his food when Leroy Jones slid into the booth.

**Leroy:** Are you busy?

**OW VO:** Pastor Jeff wasn't particularly busy, no, but he suddenly had a dire wish that he was. Leroy is the kind of person who asks questions like "Are you busy?" – which is never a good sign. This means you are in for hours of conversation, as Leroy tells coffee-breathed stories of wars he was never in and musicals he *was* unfortunately in. Pastor Jeff tried to scarf the rest of his food down, but it was too late, Leroy was already ordering with a swift:

**Leroy:** I'll have what he's having.

**OW VO:** And there Pastor Jeff was, trapped for an unknowable eternity. Leroy began confessing that he was recently having bouts of murderous rage and wasn't sure what to make of it. Pastor Jeff considered this, before saying:

**Pastor Jeff:** God has bad days too.

**OW VO:** And sent him on his way. It wasn't long before people started to notice. Suddenly someone was sliding into Pastor Jeff's window-side booth every time he paid a visit to Siren's Diner. And in this way, the diner booth became a confessional booth. Eating food while confessing your sins to a pastor? What could be better? The Pastor, of course, did not think so. The anonymity was gone. All their troubles and sins had a face now.

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** He knew that Susan Collick, the local florist, hit a possum with her car on the way into town and felt nothing. He knew that Johnathan Jackson had cheated on his wife, who was sitting in the back of the cafe, sipping on some orange juice while he talked with Pastor Jeff. But then... maybe people just didn't care anymore. They needed to own their feelings, let them hang out in the open, free from hidden guilt and secret judgement. I spotted Pastor Jeff and slid into the booth.

**OW:** Are you busy?

**Pastor Jeff:** Oh, not again.

**OW:** I have some dismal news, Pastor.

**Pastor Jeff:** I already know, my dear boy... You've finally killed someone, haven't you?

**OW:** I'm not confessing right now.

**Pastor Jeff:** Oh. Right.

**OW:** I wanted to tell you – wait, do people really think that about me?

**Pastor Jeff:** Slip of the tongue, ha! I meant you've finally *grilled* for someone, I heard you're quite the chef.

[...]

**OW:** Elder Goodwin was poisoned.

**Pastor Jeff:** So you have killed someone!

**OW:** What – no, this is not about me. I have reason to believe Elder Goodwin may have been murdered by someone in the Church. They would have needed access to his private quarters. It may be a lengthy search, but I think we can crack this...

**Pastor Jeff:** Oh it was those twin nuns. They are creepy as Hell.

**OW:** Isn't that blasphemous to say?

**Pastor Jeff:** Not when it's true. I'd put my secret stash of gold on it, it's those nuns. I'm not even sure where they came from. I didn't hire them. I think they came from the basement one day.

**OW:** Thank you, Pastor... Wait, Pastor? I have a question.

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**Pastor Jeff:** Of course.

**OW:** Why do you return to this booth if you know people are going to continue confessing to you?

**Pastor Jeff:** *(sigh)* Golly...

*[inspiring, patriotic music]*

**Pastor Jeff:** This... this is my booth. One doesn't just abandoned one's booth... and I love eggs.

**OW VO:** And with that, I made my leave. It would be difficult to argue with that logic. *(the saddest tone ever uttered)*: And now... the condolences:

*[sad piano music, like someone longingly looking out the window, waiting for their lover, who they know deep down is never going to return]*

Dawn's Dinner Bucket sends their condolences... They say: "Two dollar eggs on Tuesdays."

*[sad piano music, like someone longingly looking out the window, waiting for their lover, who they know deep down is never going to return... ends]*

Charlotte, the friend I now have, is staying in the apartment above her Aunt Lillian's bookshop. It is filled with cheap dollar store romance novels, including, but not exclusively, classic titles such as "The Enchantment of the Second Balcony," "A Ballad for Lukewarm Hearts," and who can forget, "Unwanted Fragrances," by Jannette Merriweather. I would add these to my reading list later. I needed to know more information about the sisters.

**OW:** Charlotte, how are you feeling?

**Charlotte:** So gosh darn dandy it's actually bonkers. I just realized none of my childhood dreams came true, and then I stubbed my toe a little bit ago and it kinda tickled. Oh! And this morning I started to feel like I was going to cry but then I just started laughing hysterically instead and It. Was. Great.

**OW:** Charlotte... when is the last time you had a negative emotion about *anything*, anything at all?

**Charlotte:** Negative emotions? Who needs negative emotions, silly. You're silly. Am I being silly? We're both silly, it's settled.

**OW:** I need you to think, Charlotte. Please. Was it when you started going to the support group?

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**Charlotte:** Oh right! The sisters are absolutely wonderful. They took me into a place of utter darkness and whispered unintelligible things into my ears –

**OW:** And now everything is peachy-keen, right... I think I need to have a little chat with the silent sisters.

*[foreboding music]*

**OW VO:** The sky felt darker than usual and an ominous sensation washed over me. Then again night was coming, and I was hungry, so perhaps that was it. But I would like to think there was something genuinely foreboding in the air as I approached the Church of Right Here Right Now. No one seemed to be around. Pastor Jeff was still at the Siren's Diner. Elder Isaiah Goodwin was dead. The rest of the clergy was on a field trip to throw holy water at sinners. The raging waters of the painted ceiling above me seemed to swirl on its own accord. I made eye contact with a drowning giraffe and suddenly felt a sense of hopelessness. Perhaps this is what grief feels like. Lost in a sea, looking for an ark. I crept down the spiral staircase leading to the basement. The single light was swinging to and fro, like a glowing uvula to the mouth of an abyss. Waiting for me were the nuns.

**OW:** I know what you have done, sisters. Come silently. That should be relatively easy for you.

**OW VO:** The nuns turned and vanished into the shadows beyond the light. A place of utter darkness. Dare I continue? I absolutely dare. I raced after them, a sinking dread building like stones in my stomach. The swinging light grew distant the farther I delved into the darkness. How deep was this room? Was it a room at all? *Where* was I going? And that is when it hit me. A rush of wind, an inhale of breath, a sudden levitation that relieved the weight of dread within me. I felt overwhelmingly *happy*.

*[devilish laughter all around]*

The nuns took hold of me, although I could not see them. I couldn't speak. My tongue was frozen, every word in my brain vanishing.

**Silent Nuns:** *Let go. Do not fret, our dear child. All will be well. Give us your fears. Let us feast on your tears. You will never feel pain again. Allow yourself the pleasure of delight without the burden of despair. Discomfort is not necessary. Suffering is useless. Sadness is a parasite. Relinquish. Release. Give in to ussssss.*

*[OW gasping for breath, desperate to escape]*

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** Empathic vampires. The nuns were Beings that ate emotions, consuming every negative feeling within someone. I felt light. I felt numb. They were creatures who fed on grief. The kind of thing I thought you only read about in high school textbooks. This wasn't right. This wasn't the way out of sadness, I knew this to be true. We must face it to move forward, not ignore it, not disregard it. We must own our feelings, like the confessors in the Siren's Diner. I tried to resist but I felt the artificial joy growing within me. I was being emptied, zombified, emotionally lobotomized. I was fading away...

**Pastor Jeff:** AHHHHHH!!!! Get back you duplicitous fiends!

*[ACTION PACKED MUSIC! EPIC DRUMS!! DRAMATIC ORCHESTRA!!!]*

**OW VO:** Pastor Jeff came launching from the darkness wielding a flaming torch.

*[Pastor Jeff yelping and shouting, flinging his torch around frantically]*

*[The Silent Nuns shriek like creatures of the night]*

**OW VO:** He swung it at the sisters and their grip on me loosened. As Pastor Jeff did backflips and roundhouse kicks, combatting the empathic vampires, I could see glimpses of their true form.

*[The Silent Nuns screech and scream and hiss]*

I would rather not describe them here, as it was too horrifying for the faint of heart, but let's just say their facial features had disappeared, replaced by a giant mouth filled with long, sharp, jagged teeth. They were no longer wearing their habits and their flesh was transparent. You could see every vein in their body, pulsating with a black, oozing fluid. Their spines jutted out like reptilian spikes. But like I said, I won't be describing them here. They retreated into what I now saw was a great tunnel leading away from the Church and into the unknown underground of Crestfall. They were gone... for now.

*[The Silent Nuns howl into the distance]*

**OW:** Pastor, thank you.

**Pastor Jeff:** Any time, my sugar biscuit.

**OW:** How did you know I was in trouble?

**Pastor Jeff:** Oh my dear boy, all you need to know is this – I Kick Ass For The Lord.

*[sweet rock guitar riff and choir singing to emphasize Pastor Jeff's badassery]*

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** With the nuns gone, grief has been returned to the support group members. They aren't happy, but they are themselves again, and given time, they will be happy once more –

**Charlotte:** Why would you do this?

**OW:** Charlotte?

**Charlotte:** For once I didn't feel so lost. I didn't have to think about my aunt. I didn't have to feel alone with my sadness. And now it's all back.

**OW:** But it wasn't real. You weren't happy because you had found happiness. It was fake.

**Charlotte:** At least it was something.

**OW:** You need this grief right now. You will get through it.

**Charlotte:** I just wish there was a third option. You write about death, OW, but how much do you know about what it feels like to lose someone?

**OW VO:** I opened my mouth to say something, but nothing came out. My pause was enough, and Charlotte walked away without another word. I was on my way out of the Church of Right Here Right Now when I thought I would stop by Elder Goodwin's chambers, now that the Butcher was not around to stop me. I was certain I knew what happened. When Elder Goodwin left the support group, the empathic vampires were no longer feasting on his emotions, and his grief returned to him in a rush. Instead of turning for help, he poisoned himself, burdened too greatly by the memory of loss. The poison the Butcher had found had been brought to Elder Goodwin by his own hand.

*[creepy, freaky, "uh oh, somethin' is goin' on here" music]*

His chambers told a different story, however... Oh how I wish I had seen this sooner, and oh how I wish I had never seen this at all. Every inch of the wall above Elder Goodwin's desk was covered in sketches of a horrific beast. The sketches were crude, shadows scribbled in charcoal, but the image was consistent, picture after picture. The antlers of a stag. The outline of an elongated face. The stalking hunch of a coyote prepared to attack its prey. To the Butcher this would have meant nothing, but... this was the beast I had seen in the Dark Woods. I had thought perhaps it was a dream or a waking nightmare, but here it was before me once again, clear as day, dark as night. Someone else had seen this shadow, and was being haunted by it. In his Bible was a note. It read:

**Elder Goodwin:** *I tried to save her. I tried to bring her back. There were things I wanted to say. Things I wanted to hear. It told me It could help. It told me there was a way. But I did not know the cost. It comes for me.*

*Death by Dying Official Transcript*

**OW VO:** Perhaps Elder Goodwin had still poisoned himself, but I was wrong about the reason. Perhaps there are worse things than emotion-eating vampires. The Shadow in the Dark Woods is making its way into Crestfall.

This has been the obituary of Elder Isaiah Goodwin.

**Unknown Ominous Presence:** This has been *Death by Dying*.

*[mournful, musing piano music - warped as though on an old record]*

Written and Directed by Evan Gulock. Produced by Niko Gerentes. Featuring the voices of Evan Gulock as The Obituary Writer and The Button-Eyed Raven. Angela Morris as Charlotte. Joshua Giordan as Pastor Jeff. Hedley Knights as The Silent Nuns. Niko Gerentes as Leroy Jones and The Butcher. Martha Mapes as The Girl Whose Boyfriend Got Run Over by a Lawnmower. And Donald Gulock as Elder Isaiah Goodwin. Music composed by Nicolas Gasparini, Steven O'Brien, Kevin Macleod, and Niko Gerentes. "Two Love Birds" written and performed by Evan Gulock featuring Noah Baldwin on guitar. Sound effects courtesy of [FreeSound.org](http://FreeSound.org). Creative Producer and Script Editor, Joshua Giordan. Recording Engineer and Casting Director, Niko Gerentes. If any of you duplicitous listeners would like to send their condolences, comments, hopes, fears, or dreams, you can contact The Obituary Writer personally, at [TheObituaryWriter@gmail.com](mailto:TheObituaryWriter@gmail.com). Or follow on FaceBook, Instagram, and Twitter, @DeathByDyingPod. And remember... when you are having a bad day, swinging a giant flaming torch around is almost a guaranteed solution.

*[warping piano music fade out]*