

GRIMM & GRAM

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA WITH DEATH?



SHAY MILLS

Grimm & Gram

By Shay Mills

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First Edition
Cover Art by Michelle Douglas
Proofread by Word 2 Kindle <https://word-2-kindle.com>
Copy and Line edited by Jessica Hueras (Twitter: @jesserinH)

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ISBN: 978-1-64633-496-4
(Digital)
Created for eBook in the United States of America

Dedication

I would like to acknowledge those who helped shape my life. Thank you for your time and dedication in understanding who I am. May dreams become reality.

CHAPTER ONE

The Deal

The lights flickered when Phyllis entered the attic. Her hips bothered her, and her knees were getting worse. *Old age has no benefits*, she thought. She reached for the string hanging from the light, and she pulled it too hard, causing it to break. To make it worse, the light bulb flickered again and went out permanently. Phyllis knew there was a flashlight downstairs, but her arthritis was acting up to the point of excruciating pain that radiated throughout her body. She didn't want to venture back down the ladder, down the stairs, and to the garage to get a stupid flashlight, so she crawled into the attic with only the light coming up from where the ladder was.

As soon as Phyllis placed both her knees firmly on the attic floor, the ladder folded up and the hatch closed. She was in the dark abyss. She tried to push on the hatch, but it wouldn't budge. She was alone, in the dark, with no windows. For a few seconds, she flashed back to when she was four years old, and her mother would put her in the utility closet when she got into trouble. Oh, how she so hated that closet. It still haunts her to this day.

"Get a grip, Phyllis. It's just an attic, nothing up here but spiders and dust," she said, convincing herself that it was going to be okay.

Her eyes started to adjust to the light, which aided her in remaining calm. The only remnant of light filtered ever so slightly through a small six-inch by six-inch circular vent at one end of the attic. Maybe if she used something heavy, she could smash that out and call for help.

Phyllis made her way over toward the light, bumping into objects along the way and crying out in pain. While fumbling to find some solid object to use as a hammer, she felt something cross past her legs like a cat. *That's strange*, she thought. *We haven't had a cat since Missy died*. You would think it would register as fear, but for some reason, Phyllis brushed it off as her imagination.

"Ah, here it is. I knew I left a broom up here." Phyllis took the broom and arched her arms back to shove the broom handle, end first, right into the vent.

"I wouldn't do that if I was you," a strange male voice rang out.

Phyllis jumped and dropped the broom. Quickly, she cowered down and began to scan the attic for any signs of life, but it was too dark.

"Who's there?" Phyllis said, while picking up the broomstick and waving it back and forth like a sword.

"You're pretty agile for an old woman with all those aches and pains." A deep male voice commented.

"How did you get up here, and who are you?" Phyllis backed into a corner where she felt safer with no one at her backside.

"Oh, dear, I am nothing and everything, I guess. As far as being here, it is you that is here, and I am where I am supposed to be."

"You speak in riddles. Stop scaring me." Phyllis stopped waving her broom but kept it pointed in the direction of where the voice echoed.

"Scaring you. Why, of course not. If I did that, then I would be just a monster. No, no, I am not that sort of, well, let's say being."

Phyllis stood up and shoved the broomstick into the vent poking a small hole through

it. As she tried it again, the broom was pulled from her grasp and flung across the floor. Enough light shined in to illuminate just enough of the space where Phyllis stood but no further.

"Ah, that's no better. The darkness is my friend as it is yours at this moment," the voice said calmly.

Phyllis tried to scream through the hole in the vent. When she did only air drifted out of her mouth. No sound. No scream. Nothing. She was petrified. Why wasn't her voice not working?

"Silence is a virtue, my dear."

The room suddenly became cold, frigid, surrounding Phyllis. Her mind was racing with thoughts of panic and despair. Was this guy going to kill her?

"Please don't hurt me," she squeaked out.

Phyllis again tried to scream through the small hole in the vent to no avail.

"You didn't learn the first time, I see. Well, it is no matter anyway. I am here to do a job so let's be on with it," the male voice announced.

"Wait! I just want you to leave. I have money downstairs. I can give it to you, and you can leave. I won't say a word to anyone." Phyllis finally spoke. She was grasping at straws and she was trying to convince the madman to vacate her home. "Help me open the hatch."

The man chuckled profoundly and said, "Leave? I don't want your money. I want something so much more valuable. You mean the world to me at this very moment. I am here to collect."

Phyllis backed up to the wall just below the vent to stay in the light. Out of the shadows a figure came forth, covered entirely, dressed in a black cloak. He carried a sickle. He floated on a cloud of mist. She was petrified and panicked. Her heart began to race, and her skin seeped moisture profusely from her pores.

"I am the Grimm Reaper, but you may call me Grimm. I am here to collect your soul, my dear. It is time for you to come." Grimm was theatrical and dramatic.

Phyllis was so scared she closed her eyes, a few more quick breaths, and she passed out from hyperventilation. A few hours later, her grandson came home from work. She awoke.

"Gram?" Timothy Ballard called out. "Gram!"

Phyllis could barely see, but her eyes had adjusted some. She heard a familiar voice and tried to speak, but a dry throat made it almost impossible. Had she dreamed this whole thing? Was the Grimm Reaper real? Where did he go?

Finally, moisture wet her tongue, and the saliva began to flow. Her voice rang out, "Up here, Timothy. I need help getting out."

Timothy pulled the hatch down to find his grandmother at the entrance to climb down the ladder. Before she could escape the dusty atmosphere of stale air, she heard a deep voice whisper, "I'll give you today to say goodbye. I come for you tomorrow."

Phyllis flew down the ladder, like an agile teenage girl on a track team. Sure, her bones hurt, and her joints ached, but the very sound of Grimm's voice sent chills down her spine. *One more day?* She thought. *This can't be real.*

SM

Phyllis was a great cook, but in her old age cooking had started to resemble take out or

microwaved meals. Timothy always came home for dinner unless his job prevented him from doing so. He was a good boy.

"So, what's for dinner tonight, Gram?"

"I made fried chicken, honey. I haven't cooked in weeks; I feel guilty not preparing a solid meal for you." Phyllis replied with a smile.

"Smells fantastic." Timothy placed his coat in the hallway closet and put his keys on the breakfast bar as he entered the kitchen.

Phyllis was flipping the chicken in her cast iron skillet when some grease splattered out and hit Timothy on the cheek.

"Shit! That hurt."

"What? Did the grease hit you?" Phyllis asked.

"Yeah, but no big deal. I am fine. Can I help with anything?" Timothy was getting ready to set the table. At least he could do that, considering his grandmother had probably been cooking for an hour or so. She always took a long time when she made huge homemade meals. Timothy had loved the smell of her kitchen around the holidays. It was like living in a candy store.

"Honey, you can set the table and start placing the items I get ready on placemats. It doesn't matter where on the table you place them."

Phyllis may have been close to eighty, but her mind was as sharp as a forty-year-old. Her intellectual prowess could outrace most in a game of wits, but her body always dictated her activity.

"Yes ma'am," he said, obliging his grandmother's request.

Timothy's grandma was a retired philosophy professor who enjoyed philosophical debates from time to time, but he wasn't into the conversations. His mind was always on the job.

"How's work?" Phyllis asked, like she always did each night at dinner time.

"The usual. Life in homicide, oh, boy. I might be up for Sergeant this time. Cross your fingers." Timothy grabbed the mashed potatoes and set them on the table with the butter tray. He went back for the chicken.

"Oh, honey. That would be wonderful. Your grandfather was the best cop in the city." Phyllis brought out the rolls and the handpicked green beans sautéed in butter and garlic.

"I got the chicken and the salad, Gram."

The two settled in to have a nice quiet meal with each other when the phone rang. Phyllis didn't like cell phones, so she still had a landline. Nothing special for this old lady. Either call her or don't. She didn't understand the concept of texting or the use of computers for social media. Her life was simple.

"Hello?" Phyllis asked the person on the other end of the line.

"I see we have company?" Grimm's deep voice questioned.

Phyllis knew precisely who it was because of that voice, and it sent shivers down her spine. She couldn't believe she had a sarcastic Grimm Reaper on her phone. She mustered up enough energy to confront him without looking obvious to her grandson that she was talking to a madman.

"Yes. It's dinner time. How may I help you?" Phyllis asked Grimm.

"Grandma, if that is a telemarketer, tell them adios. You don't need to be harassed." Timothy tried to be helpful.

Lately, there had been a lot of phone scam preying on the elderly. Even though Phyllis

wasn't dumb, she could be suckered into sending a thousand dollars to some orphanage in Zimbabwe. She ignored her grandson.

"Just checking in, my dear. I wanted to see how you were doing on such a lovely last evening." Grimm took in a deep breath.

"I thought I had until tomorrow?" Phyllis questioned.

"Gram tell them no." Timothy bellowed out.

"You do, but I have been thinking. I could be persuaded to give you an extension if you so desired, but there are conditions."

Timothy got up and grabbed the phone from his grandmother and began to let the telemarketer have a piece of his mind.

"Whoever you are, she isn't buying. There will be no money tomorrow, the next day, or ever. Now quit calling." He hung up the phone.

Phyllis wasn't sure what to think. *This can't be real*, she thought. The Grimm Reaper wants to make a deal, and Phyllis wasn't sure what he meant by that. As far as she thought, she was either losing her damn mind or he was real and her time on earth was limited.

"Sorry, Gram but people like that irritate me."

"That wasn't a telemarketer." Phyllis had to think quickly on her feet. "I am buying an old book, and you hung up on the guy who was selling me a 1st edition of 'The Old Man and the Sea' by Ernest Hemingway."

"Oh, that was good, Phyllis. Keep fibbing. It suits you." Grimm said while standing behind Timothy. He was hovering a foot off the ground and standing at least seven feet in height. He was menacing-looking with a ghostly skull shrouded in a fog and hands of mist.

Phyllis gasped when he appeared in mid-sentence. She didn't know what to do.

"You okay, Gram?"

"Yes. Just thinking."

"You look fearful." Timothy looked behind him and saw nothing but the curio cabinet and the vase with dried flowers.

"No, I just don't want to lose that book."

"Nice. Keep the lies going. So much better to judge you with." Grimm spewed sarcasm. "He's a nice kid. Don't worry; he doesn't go for many years from now."

Bruno Mars 'Lazy Song' began to play on Timothy's cell phone. Grimm began to rock back and forth and dance. Timothy answered his phone.

"Hello?"

"Ah, man, I liked the beat," Grimm chimed in.

"No, okay. I'm heading there now. Yes. I got it. Bye." Timothy hung up his phone with a look of disgust and irritation. "I got to go, Gram. Work!"

"Yes, work. There has been a triple homicide. I know because I just took their souls. Poor bastards didn't even put up a fight. I guess that is what you get when a drug deal goes wrong." Grimm laughed hysterically.

"I'll save your dinner, honey," Phyllis said, as Timothy grabbed his keys off the counter and coat from the hallway.

"Don't wait up, Gram. I might be late."

Timothy agreed to stay with his grandmother since his wife kicked him out of his house three years back. He had three kids, two dogs, two car payments and a mortgage that he couldn't afford. Truthfully, Timothy needed his grandmother, but she needed him too. He departed.

Grimm, on the other hand, couldn't leave well enough alone. He kept on babbling until he received an urgent message.

"Got to go. A bus went off the bridge. It looks like a flood gate opened for souls tonight." Grimm blipped out of existence, leaving Phyllis alone with hot food, and no one to share it with. Her real concern: was she going crazy?

SM

Phyllis' house had a turn of the 20th-century colonial mystique to it. For being over 100 years old, the house has stood the test of time. Thankfully, her late husband's retirement, social security, and investments had set her up for life. She had aged, but she was too proud to have hospice or a nurse. After all, her heart was still active, and she was capable of doing most things that people twenty years younger enjoy.

It was nine in the evening, and all food was put away, but Phyllis was still confused and, on a quest, to learn if she was insane or not. She kept calling out for Grimm, but he never showed. She took a shower to refresh herself and repeated the process of requesting Grimm to show himself but nothing. Maybe it was her imagination, but as she was sitting on her bed, getting ready to watch some television, he appeared.

As Grimm appeared, Phyllis accidentally dropped her popcorn onto her lap, but that wasn't her biggest concern.

"You are not real." Phyllis was convinced she was cuckoo.

"Oh, I would not say that. I am real but known differently around the world. You aren't religious, so the Grimm Reaper is your choice of my manifestation."

"Other names?"

"Sure, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Hades, and so many more."

"This can't be real. Why would the Grimm Reaper come and take my soul personally?"

"How else do you think you get sent off to the after-life? See, I have an arrangement with the almighty. I collect, she judges. Simple as that."

"I won't go to hell?" Phyllis asked, concerned. "I've lived a good life."

"Again, Phyllis, I don't judge. I merely escort the dead to their new existence." Grimm floated over the end of the bed, blocking the television.

"I don't wanna die."

"No one does. I hate my job sometimes, but that is just the way it is. Since I like you, I will make that deal with you. Wanna know more?" Grimm grinned, but for a skull, you couldn't tell.

"What deal?" Phyllis asked curiously.

"Simple. An eye for an eye or in this case, for every person you kill, I will give you another year. I need a soul to replace yours. Agreed."

Phyllis was mortified. *Kill! Hell no!* She thought. Grimm had gotten sadistic in his old age and like to play games now and then.

"I like you, Phyllis. I will give your life for a life. Whatcha say?"

Phyllis didn't say a word. She slumped back into her bed with popcorn spilling onto the floor. To kill was insane, but to die was petrifying.

"Phyllis?" Grimm was getting impatient.

"I can't do it!" Phyllis began to shed some tears.

"Phyllis, dear. You can do this. It's easy. Older people die from accidents every day. Just be creative."

"A life for my life? One year? Accidents?" Phyllis was talking in choppy sentences.

"Phyllis, remember, the first one is always the hardest."

Grimm disappeared as quickly as he came. Phyllis was stuck in a quandary of right and wrong. This dilemma set in front of her didn't sit well in her stomach. On the one hand, she didn't want to die, and on the other hand, she couldn't take a life, could she? Who would she kill? The whole thing seemed deranged, but maybe if she went to sleep, she would wake up to a world where Grimm was a dream. Maybe.

SM

Timothy was out half of the night and up before dawn to capture criminals and rid the streets of homicides. Phyllis was making breakfast and was sure that the Grimm Reaper was a figment of her imagination. After all, she had been dwelling on death lately. She wasn't a spring chicken anymore, which makes her think that any day now she could pass on. The television came on all by itself. The commercial was annoying.

"Come on down to Junk Auction today and today only. Get your free beer cooler when you arrive. 91112 Cherry Street. Can't wait to help ya!"

"What a bunch of shit," Grimm spouted out as he took control of the television set. He flipped through a few channels and stopped on 'Dead Like ME' and began to laugh. *Great show*, he thought.

Phyllis was getting used to the guy. Sure, he was the Grimm Reaper to her, but he had the ability to appear as other notable characters in religious history. If he was a figment of her imagination, she was winning awards for the most dramatic and well thought out hallucination.

"So, you are real, and I am given a choice," Phyllis said to reassure herself of the deal. She was a strong independent woman who used to run the Philosophy department at the university and wasn't shy to sarcasm. If this thing was going to decide her fate, she wasn't going down without a fight.

Grimm stared at the TV and did not pay attention to Phyllis at all. He was so engrossed in the show that he even repeated the lines from the actors.

"Do you have ADHD or something? You can't even answer my question. What kind of god are you?"

"God?" Grimm laughed. "Oh, not quite. See, I hear you. I am one of the chosen few ever to grace the magnificent realm of tranquility."

"So, where are you now? I mean, where do you live?" Phyllis took a seat at the dining room table to eat. "I'm in here eating."

Grimm turned off the television and floated into the dining room. There he moved a chair and pretended to be sitting down.

"I live here and there because I enjoy humans. I enjoy everything about your divine chaos. Such interesting vermin." Grimm raised his sickle and dropped the stock into the floor, making a loud crack noise. "We must make a deal, or I take your soul."

A glow formed around Grimm and twelve-foot, black-as-coal, raven wings folded out from behind him. Phyllis was amazed but not scared.

"Sit down before you break something!" She demanded.

"Ah, come on. I thought it had flare and all. You ruined it," Grimm complained. "I only get one shot at this, and you stepped on my toes, lady."

"Get over it," Phyllis said with a smile. "I don't know if I can kill someone. Accident or not, I am nervous and scared to even think about doing such a thing."

"Listen, Phyllis, when I was charged with collecting souls 365 days a year I didn't complain. I did my duty and am still doing it. Hell, Santa Clause has nothing on me. One night a year, ha! I work more than anyone."

"How can you be here and collecting souls around the world?" Phyllis asked, with her eyebrows raised.

"Well, I have minions that do my dirty work. I come for those I am interested in. You were on my way to another appointment. I figured kill two birds with one stone," Grimm replied. "Quit avoiding the question."

"What question?" Phyllis played dumb.

"Yes or no? Do you want the deal?"

"A couple more questions, Grimm. If I take a life, I get a whole year; but if I kill more than that is a new year is added on?"

"Yes!" Grimm was impatient.

"How do I do it?" Phyllis sighed.

"It will come to you. Don't force it. I will give you a week to "take a life" as you put it. After that, I must collect it."

"Why don't you take their life?"

"I can't. I take the dead only, but you can do it." Grimm took the shape of a very handsome, olive-skinned fellow, who was pleasing to the eyes. "Is that better?"

"Nice to meet you, Grimm. I am ready for the deal."

"Done. One-week Phyllis. One week and don't forget it. By midnight on Monday, you must have killed someone, or you will be judged."

Phyllis agreed but didn't think of judgment after her killings. Will this almighty deity be forgiving? Grimm stood, took Phyllis' hand, and kissed it to say goodbye. He faded out of existence. Phyllis sat alone to eat her breakfast when Timothy came home.

"Hey Gram, you home?"

"In the dining room honey."

Timothy entered the dining room and kissed his grandma on the forehead. She had a look of concern on her face.

"Everything alright, Gram? You look worried." Timothy stole a piece of his grandma's turkey bacon.

"I'm fine. Just worried about that book." Phyllis finished her eggs but didn't feel like eating anymore.

"Sorry about that last night. I didn't know. I thought it was a telemarketer. Sorry." Timothy made his way to the kitchen to get a glass of water.

"Hey, how about we go out tonight? I can take you to Alfonso's for an evening of wine and jazz." Timothy took his grandma from time to time to comedy clubs, music venues, and even took her to see Bette Midler in Las Vegas. He was a good grandson.

Phyllis had a look of surprise on her face, but her first dilemma had to be taken care of soon. Maybe a night out would be better to get her nerves over the issue of killing someone. Life had turned upside down. How did she ever get involved in something like this? *It had to be a dream.* She thought.

“Sure, dear. I would like that.”

“Okay, around seven or so. I get off work at five unless...” He was interrupted by Phyllis.

“Unless there is a murder. I know, I know.”

In a world full of demons, ghosts, and religious zealots, there will always be thoughts of a divine tranquil location like heaven and a place for those who deserve the dark abyss for their wrongdoings. Grimm was a messenger, a guide, and one who traversed between the tranquil life and the darkness he created. Phyllis was now a part of that darkness.

CHAPTER TWO

Blissful Killings

"What a beautiful day," Phyllis commented, but her nasty, foul mouthed, belittling, and backhanded compliment giving best friend Eleanor had to give her shitty two cents.

"Sure, if you like pollen, crabgrass, and the smell of the fucking pulp mill. That shit can gag a horse." Eleanor was chain-smoking a cigarette with her window rolled up.

"Ellie, please roll down your window," Phyllis asked politely.

"Oh, shit. Sorry to invade your precious space." Eleanor spitefully opened her window only half an inch.

Phyllis always wondered how she became friends with such a cynical witch. No one visited her or really even knew she existed. Eleanor's family was either dead or had disowned her years ago. Poor Eleanor had only Phyllis.

"Slow down! You shouldn't have a license. Why do I even get into a car with you?" Eleanor was in her continuous bitch mode.

"Now dear, I'm driving the speed limit, and I haven't had an accident in over forty years. I think we are safe."

At a stoplight, two young men pulled up beside them, their music played so loud it was shaking the windows in Phyllis's car. Eleanor rolled down the window and stared at the men in the convertible Mustang. She had a look about her that spoke volumes of venom and nastiness.

"Turn that shit down, you dumb fucks, or you'll go deaf."

The traffic light turned green, and the men sped off at a high rate of speed but four blocks up they were pulled over by the police. Eleanor gave them the middle finger as she passed by them.

Eleanor wasn't one to shy away from telling people exactly what she was thinking. Phyllis was well-aware of that and had thought about ending the relationship. Eleanor was a disease; a cancer that needed to be cut out.

"You know what chaps my hide? Those goddamn butt wipes. I tried to use them, and all they do is cause my butt to itch. Why would I pay for something that causes my ass to hurt?!" Eleanor was spewing out venom.

"Do you need to go anywhere else, Ellie? Phyllis asked.

"Huh, uh, no. I don't think so."

Phyllis headed back to Eleanor's house to end a four-hour shopping ordeal that was supposed to be one store and about thirty minutes. Eleanor had hospice care, and a nurse came to check on her daily, but when Phyllis came to pick up Eleanor, the help would disappear for an hour or so. The nurse was only around for the twice daily vital signs and medication, but mostly the personal care assistant helped Eleanor in the evening. Eleanor had a bad heart and was too old for a heart transplant. Poor Eleanor was going to die.

"My time will come, Phyllis but goddamn it won't be any time soon."

Phyllis pulled into Eleanor's driveway. Eleanor put out her cigarette in the ashtray she carried with her. It was a small metallic bag that clipped at the top. She put kitty litter in it, and it held about six cigarette butts at a time.

"Okay, Ellie, I must go. Tell Lilly, I said hi." Phyllis said with a smile.

"Lilly got fired. It's Holly now. I know you're not gonna make an old woman with a

heart condition carry her groceries in the house.” Eleanor had a look like ‘bitch get steppin’.

Phyllis reluctantly turned her car off and engaged the emergency brake. She quietly went and retrieved the groceries from the trunk, two bags, and aided an old woman five years younger than her into the house. Phyllis was fit as a fiddle aside from the occasional aches and pains of age.

“Fucking birds shit on my porch again. See, can’t get good help. That fucking Mexican gardener keeps fucking up my lawn too. I hate this neighborhood.” Eleanor kept bitching.

Eleanor’s house was rather small and only one bedroom, but it was all the old woman needed. Phyllis didn’t intend to stay, but somehow Eleanor had worked her way into Phyllis’s subconscious and dug in her heels.

“Ellie, I can only stay for an hour. I am going to have dinner with my grandson.”

“Oh yeah? That kiss ass, how is that kid?” Eleanor plopped down in her reclining chair in the living room. She loved that chair so much she asked to have it given to charity when she died. Charity?

“Timothy is fine. He might make sergeant.” Phyllis put the groceries on the counter as the personal care assistant put them away.

“Holly, I don’t need you for an hour. Go smoke that weed you like and hide on your phone or something.”

The nurse checked Eleanor’s vital signs and dispensed medication. She departed for the evening but not before she gave instructions for Eleanor to give up the damn wine. Holly did as she was told and sat out on the back deck, smoking and playing on her phone, content as could be.

“Dumb as shit but sweet as pie, that one there,” Eleanor commented about Holly.

“Is there anything I can do for you, Ellie?” Phyllis asked in hopes that if she does what Eleanor asked, she can get the fuck out of dodge.

“Yeah, you can tell me if you know anything about that cunt Celia fucking Robert years back?”

“Your husband, Robert?” Phyllis asked to clarify.

“No, the fucking tooth fairy... Yes, my Robert. That fucking little twat took advantage of my husband. He was Celia’s mentor at school. An eighteen-year-old kid seduced my husband, and I didn’t find out until Julia told me at the beauty salon that Celia had been bragging about it. I guess everyone in town talks crap about me. Am I the butt of everyone’s jokes?”

Phyllis was feeling sorry for the cranky old bitch of a woman. *Maybe she didn’t need to die*, she thought.

“You fucking knew, didn’t you?!”

Everyone knew, but no one wanted to confront the scary lady on snob hill. She was the stereo typical witch and cat lady. No one dared question her.

“No, I didn’t know,” Phyllis lied.

“You’re lying. I can tell. You always switch your lip when you lie.” Eleanor was getting worked up. The nurse had left the blood pressure machine hooked up, and her blood pressure was rising.

“Calm down, Ellie,” Phyllis asked her friend, but inside she was hoping she would just die already. Wait, if she died, then it wouldn’t count as a kill.

Eleanor started to act funny and began to cough. When she caught her breath, she

asked for her heart medication, under labored breathing. It was in the medication bin in her bedroom. Phyllis took off running when she realized this was it. Grimm showed up.

"Hmmm, we have a nice dilemma here. See, easy as making a pie. Don't give her the meds." Grimm chimed in.

Grimm didn't appear to Phyllis; it was only his voice that rang out. She looked around the room and whispered, "I got this." Phyllis went to the bathroom and flushed the heart medication and ran out to Eleanor.

"There is nothing in the bottle. You are out of medication." Phyllis said scared but exhilarated.

Eleanor's eyes rolled back in her head, and with a violent shake, she went silent. The old woman was dead. Phyllis had done the impossible and killed her best friend. A woman who everyone saw as cancer. A real bitch!

SM

It had been three months since Eleanor died. The police didn't question a thing when presented with an empty pill bottle. Life seemed tranquil with no sight of Grimm in Phyllis' life, or so it seemed.

The shops on Commerce Avenue were stuck in time of an era where small-town stores thrived, and Walmart was an infant. Phyllis loved to shop in thrift stores, antique shops, bookstores, and more. She could spend most of her day down on Commerce Ave. The food was plentiful and delicious from every ethnic background possible. Greek was her favorite.

As Phyllis exited Kathy's Consignment Shoppe, she noticed Frederick Masterson on the other side of the street. He was a handsy old man who was stuck in a time when sexual harassment was the norm. He was a resident at the assisted living home where most of Phyllis' friends resided. She wanted to avoid the prick. *If he touches me one more time, I will...* Her thoughts were interrupted by a familiar voice.

"You will kill him, right? Oooh, this is delicious. Please do tell how you might do so?" Grimm inquired.

Phyllis was caught off guard and startled a little, but she kept her composure. Her eyes were set on Frederick. She was hoping he wouldn't see her before she got to her car. Too late.

"Phyllis! Hey, how are you?" Handsy Freddy came running.

Phyllis braced herself for the worst. Frederick was jogging to get across the street. He was a fine-looking seventy-something who was in great shape for his age. He was popular with the single ladies for one thing. He could still get it up.

"Hi, Frederick," Phyllis said with a heavy heart.

"Oh man, am I glad to see you on this fine day. Honey, if I didn't know it, you are an angel because the sun doesn't compare to your beauty."

"Charmer, I see," Phyllis pretended to be kind.

"So, tell me, babe, are you seeing anyone these days?" Handsy Freddy asked, while licking his lips and adjusting his junk.

"I like alone time," Phyllis responded firmly.

"Alone is fine, but when you have a stud like me at your disposal, you should take advantage." Frederick was full of himself.

"This guy is a stupid fucker, isn't he?" Grimm buzzed in.

"Yes," Phyllis replied to Grimm, not knowing she replied to Frederick at the same

time.

"Good, take advantage. I can pick you up for dinner at six-thirty. Whatcha say, sweetheart?" Handsy Freddy slapped Phyllis on the ass.

Phyllis jumped back a little perturbed, but she didn't say a word. *Only if I could kill this mother fucker*, she thought.

"Yes, Yes, we must kill the mother fucker," Grimm implanted thoughts in Phyllis' mind.

'How' was the question? How do you kill an arrogant asshole and womanizer?

"Okay," Phyllis said with a shiver running down her spine. That guy gave her the creeps.

Later, in the early evening, the night sky was dazzling in pink waves of clouds spanning the horizon. Phyllis had been plotting all day how to kill the sexist pig known as Frederick Masterson. *Maybe if I have sex with him, he would die of a heart attack. No, that might be a pattern. Push him over a bridge or down some stairs. That might work. I know, I can overdose him. It happens all the time. Old people take the wrong meds.*

"Good thinking, Phyllis. You have another year coming, and it's only been three months since you killed last. There you go honey, sugar pie, sweetie and all the other sexist shit I can say. Go kill the bastard."

One thing about Frederick, he may have been a piece of shit, but he was always kind to a woman if he got what he wanted.

He showed up with candy and flowers at Phyllis' house; as if chivalry was dead, he thought not. He was a charmer, but his vernacular from the 1960s left something to be desired. He treated a woman like they were his playground. It was his charming ways that separated him from the other wolves. He was kind, gentle, and persuasive.

"Madam, I see you are ready. My god, you are a thing of beauty. Truly, girl, you take my breath away." Frederick was trying to be on his best behavior, but as the night progressed, his personality came shining through.

At dinner, Frederick couldn't stop flirting with every female worker in the restaurant. He barely sat down and could be seen at the bar talking to the twenty-something hot little number behind the counter. He said he had to use the bathroom. Phyllis didn't care. Let the son of a bitch dream. At least she was getting a free meal.

All night, through dinner and dancing, Phyllis was contemplating other ways to kill the Frederick. He will no longer prey on women.

"I think we should go home," Phyllis said, as Handsy Freddy sat back in his seat. "I ordered doggy bags for us."

"Go home, huh. My place or yours?"

"Yours is fine, but I don't want anyone seeing us. I like to keep my secrets, secret if you know what I mean?" Phyllis was sneaky.

"Hell yeah, I have a back patio that faces the lake. You can come through there. No one parks in the back because of the seagulls."

"Let's go," she said convincingly.

The evening faded into darkness, as promised, the back-parking lot was empty and only one bungalow away from Handsy Freddy's place. Was Phyllis ready for this, again?

"This is it. Remember, don't get caught." Grimm whispered.

"Shh," Phyllis responded.

"Shh, to what my dear?" Handsy Freddy opened the door and turned on the living

room lights. His house wasn't what she expected. It was decorated with a woman's touch. Maybe it was one of the girls he seduced or perhaps he was secretly a closet gay. No straight man had this much talent to decorate his house.

"I'll go freshen up," Phyllis said, as she made her way to the bathroom.

The bathtub was one of those full-size sit-down tubs with a door. Phyllis always wanted one but never put forth the effort to have one installed. Then it came to her. "Why don't we take a bath, Freddy?"

"A bath, huh. I like that. I will show you things you wouldn't believe." Handsy Freddy was already getting an erection.

Phyllis convinced Frederick to get into the tub while she puts on a show. She danced in her panties and bra stripping for him, causing the old man to quiver in the water. He was so horny he almost burst.

"Kill him now!" Grimm demanded.

"Do you have any wine, Freddy?"

"Sure doll. In the wine cooler in the kitchen. Grab what you want, babe. Oh, would you be a doll and get me my cigar and lighter." He slaps her on the ass as she turns to leave.

Frederick kept all his meds on the kitchen counter so he knew he wouldn't miss taking them. Phyllis knew he took Klonopin for anxiety and Ambien for sleep. If she mixed them in his wine, he would pass out.

Minutes later, she arrived with his poisonous cocktail. He drank his up quick and demanded that Phyllis get in the bathtub. Phyllis stripped-down knowing the pills might take a bit and danced some more, but ultimately, she climbed into the tub. He was kissing her neck and shoulders. His kisses were like dried fruit with saliva barely breaking the flaky texture of his lips. Within minutes he became tired, drowsy, and started to slur his words. Phyllis used four times the dose, and it was clearly working. She pushed her would-be lover aside and exited the tub. He was awake but not coherent enough to know what was going on.

"Kill him!" Grimm growled.

Phyllis reached out and pushed Handsy Freddy under the water with his arms flailing slightly for ten seconds then nothing. Ten more seconds pass, and the old man never put up a fight.

"Fuck yeah! You did it again. Die you filthy bastard!" Grimm was happy.

"I need to leave," Phyllis stated.

Phyllis got dressed, called a cab from Handsy's house, and went home. The next day Frederick Masterson was found, and it was to be determined an accident; death by drowning. It seemed he took too many anxiety and sleep medication before falling asleep in the tub. Either way, Phyllis now had twenty-one months left on her life. A charmed life, indeed!



Christmas was just around the corner. Timothy was over for dinner as usual, but something was different; he brought a girl.

"Gram, this is Teshia. She's my new partner, and I thought I would introduce you to her since she might be around a lot."

Phyllis came around the reclining chair and into the foyer. Her hand was extended to greet Teshia.

"Lovely name, honey. I am guessing mixed based on your skin tone." Phyllis

commented, without regard to personal feelings and shook her hand.

"Gram, that was...", Timothy was interrupted by Teshia.

"It's fine. Simply put, I have a white father and a black mother. I am not all that politically correct. African American is fine too." Teshia smiled at Phyllis.

"Honey, I like you already. Sorry if I came across rude." Phyllis apologized.

"No, no problem. Should I call you Gram?"

"No need. My name is Phyllis, and it is very nice to meet you."

Phyllis had a surprise. She wasn't into cooking as much as she used to, but Chinese take-out was on the menu that night.

"Sweet. I get the pot stickers," Timothy proclaimed.

Phyllis slapped his hand for diving in without allowing the women to go first. One thing about Phyllis: while she might be a free thinking, independent, strong-willed woman, she wasn't an extreme feminist. She did, however, still believe in the antiquated concept of chivalry and a few other customs that were outdated; hence, women served themselves first. Grandpa used to say, "Respect women always, for they gave you life."

Teshia giggled at Timothy for his childlike look when he was slapped for taking food. It was funny to her.

"Gram, the ceremony is tomorrow. Don't forget."

"Will the kids be there?" Phyllis asked Timothy.

"Yes, and they would love to see you. Also, I get joint custody per the judge.

Yesterday was stressful in that courtroom. Are you sure you are okay with the kids staying here on the weekends and six weeks in the summer?"

"Honey, I would love that. I rarely see them as it is since I spoke my mind to your wife."

"Ex-wife!" Timothy proclaimed.

"Yes, well she was a bitch to me, and I put her in her place. Since then, the kids haven't been over." Phyllis said this for Teshia's sake so she could be part of the conversation.

"I know. I fixed it. My lawyer did a great job. I only wanted what was good for the kids." Timothy smiled.

"For you too," Teshia chimed in, while putting some noodles on her plate. "Thank you, ma'am, for having me for dinner. Much appreciated."

"You're welcome." Phyllis finished getting her food and smiled at Timothy to dig in. Timothy was starving.

Later in the den, while drinking some wine, Teshia brought up a conversation that put Phyllis on edge.

"Tim, Davis told me that there have been a string of elderly dying in the area by accidental death. A reporter was investigating possible murder via accident in these cases. Could it be possible that the accidents aren't accidents like the reporter claims?" Teshia inquired

"I heard the same thing. I think the Captain is going to put a kibosh on the shit... I mean stuff and put out a department-wide memo to stay away from reporters." Timothy responded while walking over the window to stare out to the dimly lit street.

"I guess so, but something about the situation does smell fishy." Teshia took a sip of her wine. "Delicious ma'am. Thank you."

"It's from my vineyard," Phyllis smirked in jest.

"You have a vineyard?" Teshia said, believing Phyllis.

“No honey, I bought it. It’s a mediocre wine but tastes good.”

Crash, bang, boom! Noise reverberated through the walls. Timothy just witnessed two cars racing down the street and a green car smashing into the telephone pole in front of his grandma’s house. The lights flickered in the house.

“Gram, call 911. Teshia, with me.”

Timothy and Teshia rushed out the door to tend to the victim or victims. Gram made the call and followed suit. The ambulance took ten minutes but by that time the man and his girlfriend had died. The whole front end of the car was smashed into their laps, exploded the girl's intestines and crushed the man's chest with some metallic object in his neck.

“Gruesome isn’t it. Well, I must work,” Grimm appeared and collected the souls of the departed.

Grimm walked over to the driver and laid his hand on the dead man's head. He pulled and just like de-boning a chicken the soul was free, but it looked like it was in agony. Grimm repeated the process for the woman who was crying before they vanished. Grimm strolled over to Phyllis and smiled.

“I smell Chinese food. Yum.” Grimm made his way into the house to try some tasty morsels.

Timothy and Teshia couldn’t do anything to save those people's lives. It was sad, really. Only if Phyllis could get credit for the lives, she wouldn't have to worry about killing again for a few more years. Nah, she began to like it. Phyllis was a killer.

CHAPTER THREE

Suspicion

A year passed, and the winter weather was dumping pounds of snow on the ground, making it difficult for travelers to get to their destinations on Thanksgiving Day. Phyllis was careful, but she had successfully taken two more lives without suspicion. She was getting good at this.

Grimm would show his face from time to time. For some reason, he took a liking to the old lady who intended to live to one hundred and fifty years old. She was his favorite little serial killer. She was so methodical about her business that it was no wonder she loved the television show, *Dexter*.

Phyllis' new neighbors, a retired couple, moved in next door. The husband had a mild case of Alzheimer's, and the wife was just like Eleanor. She could easily ignore her, but the old man wouldn't stop showing his junk every morning when he went to get the newspaper. Additionally, he walked around the house naked most of the time with no curtains on the side of the house facing Phyllis' kitchen windows. Her itch grew and dug in with the idea of killing the old man. He could easily fall down a flight of stairs.

The newspaper was delivered early in the morning like the old fashion paper route that Timothy had when he was a kid growing up in the nineties. Phyllis strolled out on a cold, damp morning to fetch her newspaper. At least they put a plastic bag around it. Sometimes the damn newspaper was dropped off on the lawn instead of up the walkway by the mailbox. A snowplow would come by and bury the damn thing. That day was this type of day and to top it off, Naked Henry was walking out to fetch his paper with his robe open. A neighbor yelled out, "Get some clothes on."

"Henry, for god sakes put some underwear on old man. I don't want to see that." Phyllis demanded.

"I see your newspaper got buried again," Henry commented.

"Go away, Henry. You need a bath." Phyllis gave up on the newspaper and ventured back into her house.

Timothy was eating breakfast with his kids. They were over for a week since it was his turn to have them for Thanksgiving. Phyllis had a long morning ahead of herself. The night before she spent five hours making pies and other baked goods for the party. Timothy invited his partner, or secret lover, for the festivities. All in all, about thirty people showed up for her party.

Before dinner was served, Phyllis asked Timothy to take care of the guy next door.

"Can't you arrest him?" Phyllis asked Timothy.

"Yes, Gram but not today. It's Thanksgiving. I can warn him, though. Maybe that will fix this."

"Go ahead. I have to get everything on the table."

"I'll help, ma'am." Teshia volunteered.

Timothy went next door and found the couple sitting in front of their TV, eating a frozen turkey meal.

"Sir, we have had complaints in the neighborhood that you are not fully clothed when retrieving your newspaper."

"Who are you?"

"Sorry, sir." Timothy pulled out his badge. "Metro, Sir. My grandma lives next door."

"Oh, that bitch!" Naked Henry bellowed.

Timothy kept his composure. All the police training he received was coming in handy.

"Sir, just wear appropriate clothing outside, or I will have to arrest you for indecent exposure and lewd conduct."

"Go fuck yourself. Get off my property." Naked Henry shouted.

"Sir, you have been notified. One more incident and you will be arrested."

The door slammed in his face. Timothy was irritated. His blood pressure had been on the rise lately and being forty-two now, he had to watch what he drank and ate.

Back at the house, the Thanksgiving meal was ready, and everyone sat down to a beautiful evening. Phyllis, on the other hand, had other ideas; something about frigged temperatures, water, and freezing one's balls. That sounds like fun.

SM

For a week now, Phyllis had observed her neighbor sneaking cigarette breaks on the back deck of his house, and of course, he was close to naked. How could anyone withstand the frigged cold whipping through every orifice? Naked Henry would smoke three or four cigarettes and then proceed to walk around his house at two in the morning, naked.

She formulated a plan and was now ready to put it into action. First to the hardware store. Interior One Hardware was open twenty-four hours a day and Phyllis couldn't sleep.

The store was empty and even void of employees. There were one cashier and no one else on the floor. *Maybe they were all on break?* She pondered. Phyllis walked down a few aisles and found the garden section. She needed a shovel and a fifty-foot water hose. She thought about Duct Tape, but that would leave evidence. Nope, a slip and fall should do the trick. What about the shovel?

"I see you are gardening?" The little grey haired thirty twenty-something commented.

Phyllis didn't understand why young folks died their hair grey. It was going to happen to them sooner or later.

"Couldn't sleep so I thought I would get started early. I bought most of my stuff the other day. You know, last-minute stuff. I am doing a greenhouse nursery until the weather is better."

"You should be proud of yourself. You know, an old woman like you still working hard. I admire that," the cashier said, while chewing bubblegum.

Phyllis didn't even respond to the backhanded compliment. Her focus was on purchasing the shit and getting out. She had an important date with Naked Henry, and it couldn't wait.

"Will that be all, ma'am?" The cashier asked, while flipping her hair out of her face.

Phyllis gave a look to her as if she was dumb. There was nothing else on the conveyor belt so yeah, she was done.

"Yes, that is all," Phyllis said, irritated.

Timothy noticed his Gram's car parked at the hardware store. Kind of unusual for Gram to be out so late. Timothy was investigating a homicide that might be linked to a string of murders in the metro area.

When Phyllis exited the store, the snow stopped her cart from pushing forward, and even though she was a strong lady, she couldn't get it through the snow.

"Damn it, when do they plow this parking lot?"

"Never!" Timothy shouted from his unmarked car.

"I didn't see you there." Phyllis kept trying to push the cart.

Timothy got out of his car and helped his Grandmother carry her items to her car. He left the cart right at the entrance. Let them get it.

"Why gardening stuff in the middle of winter Gram?"

"I saw a sale in the local flyer and couldn't sleep, so I bought a few things."

Kind of made sense, right? Timothy honestly didn't think much about it. Sure, it was odd to have a shovel and a hose in the middle of winter. He never connected the dots.

"Besides, Timothy, my other hose was left out, and it became brittle and cracked."

"Let's get you home, Gram. I am sure you are tired."

Timothy was off shift, so he escorted his Grandmother home. Imagine an old woman doing suspicious things in the middle of the night. Why is it that babies and old people get away with anything?

"So whatcha thinking? I think death by tundra. Hit him hard and spray water all over him. Let him freeze outside? Yeah, that's what I would do." Grimm suggested while pacing in Phyllis' bedroom.

"You are not me. How would explain the water all over him? Don't worry, I have a plan. That nasty bastard won't know what hit him.

"I hope so. I love watching you work. Just think, young lady, you couldn't kill one person three years ago and now look at you. You have, what, fifteen years now collected. Nice work." Grimm stopped pacing.

"Gram, who are you talking to?" Timothy asked, while outside his grandmother's bedroom door.

"Myself, honey. I am reading out loud. No big deal. Have a good night."

"I thought for sure little Timothy here was going to figure out something was up with a shovel and hose in the middle of winter." Grimm grinned.

"He believes what I say. He is a good boy!"

"So, tell me." Grimm waited on pins and needles.

"I am going to..." Phyllis smiled and paused. "Just watch."

It was four in the morning, and sure enough old naked Henry appeared in the kitchen, he grabbed his smokes and headed out to the back deck. Phyllis left a giant chocolate bar, I mean massive, in the middle of his yard hoping to entice the fat bastard to get it. Naked Henry locked eyes on the candy bar, and he swiftly made his way to the top of the eight steps leading down to a concrete walkway that spans from the back of the house to the alley. Henry slipped with his body smashing hard against the stairs. His body was so massive that gravity took control of the rest. He slammed into the concrete hard, but he was lucky not to smash his head.

"Damn it!" Grimm buzzed in Phyllis' ear.

Naked Henry got to his feet to see stars and blackness. Phyllis walloped the son of a bitch in the back of the head with the shovel; you could hear the ding for a block. Timothy stirred in his bed and looked out his window. Luckily, his window faced the front of the house. He saw nothing and went back to sleep.

Phyllis grabbed Naked Henry's head and slammed it several times into the bottom stair, making it look like he fell and hit the back of his head; besides, he wasn't dead yet. Blood soaked her fingers when she finally stopped banging his head to the wood. She

smashed his head so hard she broke more wood than his fall had damaged. The hose and the shovel came in handy.

"God, I love your work. You amaze me," Grimm smiled with pride, as he pulled the soul out of Naked Henry.

Phyllis quickly washed up, burned her shirt in the furnace, and drove the shovel and hose to a drop off service for Goodwill. *No evidence, no proof*, she thought.

Timothy woke up the next morning to screaming from the next-door neighbor's wife. It seems her husband fell down the stairs, and his frozen body was found in his backyard. Timothy called in the police and stayed to calm the lady. Phyllis, on the other hand, was celebrating her Houdini act. Who's next?

SM

Timothy was hiding a cigarette from his partner as he tossed it out the window of the car. Teshia returned from the bank. He hadn't smoked in years, but lately, he had been stressed. His ex-wife was making life difficult by not sticking to court ordered visits. Additionally, a homicide case he was handling involved the mother of a woman whom he had dated back in college.

"I smell smoke. Are you smoking?" Teshia asked Timothy, as she entered the car.

"No, but a dude who was waiting for the bus was." Timothy lied.

If he wanted to wrestle in the bed, then he had to behave — time for him to be gentlemen even on those occasional unwilling days.

"I was thinking about a movie and dinner at home tonight?" Teshia suggested, as she started the car.

"Sounds good," Timothy responded.

Later that evening the couple settled in for an action flick and some leftover lasagna from the night before. Even though they hadn't seen the movie, Teshia was very talkative and curious about the reporter that had been working the story for over a year.

"Tamara says that all of the elderly dying in the area, over the last three years, are related, none of them have died of natural causes. She says she has proof. An older woman had been spotted at several of the locations, but no witness could identify her since she stayed out of the streetlights and hid in the shadows. I am guessing we are dealing with a pro."

"Pro, huh. I think you are reading too much into this. There is no proof of your conspiracy. All the elderly who have died, as you suggested, in the last three years for the metro area...? It's quite an undertaking to investigate each and every one. Why are you worried about this?"

"Tamara's aunt, who she never got to know, died and left her everything. She is convinced that her aunt was pushed down the stairs, and the only person there that night... was Phyllis."

"This lasagna tastes like warmed-over butt. I am eating a frozen dinner." Timothy broke the conversation and headed to the kitchen, but Teshia kept on talking.

"Listen, I know you love your Gram, but we need to investigate this. I think she knows more than you want to believe."

"Stop!" Timothy hollered across the room. "Enough, my grandma isn't a serial killer. Why are you grasping at straws?"

"Don't yell at me. I was trying to point out Sergeant, that this is worth checking out."

"I'm done with this. Enjoy the movie. I am going to bed." Timothy announced, upset.

Timothy put the half-open box of frozen meatloaf back in the freezer and marched straight to bed. Teshia was so upset she ignored him for the night. It wasn't often he stayed over at her place, and his attitude guaranteed no action for him in bed that night. Still, there was merit in Teshia's comments; he just didn't know it yet.

SM

Christmas passed, and Teshia and Tamara wouldn't leave the issue, with Phyllis being the lone suspect. Every time Teshia visited the house, she would eye Phyllis knowing that there could be some validity to Tamara's suspicions. Phyllis still had no clue, but soon Timothy spilled the beans.

The rest home was a lonely place with someone passing each month. Phyllis was a regular at the assisted living center, and she didn't think her presence among those she killed would come back and haunt her. She was careful and deserved living a long life, or so she thought.

Teddy was a kind gentleman of ninety-two years. He recently transitioned from the assisted living to a nursing home due to his health. Phyllis liked Teddy and wished him no ill will. Her heart wasn't set on killing the innocent. She loved killing those that didn't need to exist anymore. Teddy was in so much pain he couldn't walk. His body was riddled with cancer and every facet of his being ached.

"Teddy, it's nice to see you," Phyllis commented, with a huge smile.

Teddy coughed and said, "Always nice to see you, Phyllis."

Teddy was now bedridden and fatigued constantly. His mind was as sharp as a tack, but his body said no more. All Teddy wished for the day of reprieve; he so desired death.

"Would you like to hear a story or the news?" Phyllis had been visiting Teddy for a few years now. She was feeling guilty for killing his friend, Robert a year earlier.

"News would be fine."

"It's all about Trump." Phyllis held a USA today paper in her hands.

"Ah, crap. Why did that guy become president? First an actor now a pompous windbag." Teddy coughed again.

"You sound sick?" Phyllis questioned.

"My great-grandson was ill, and he brought it to me when he visited."

"Aw, sorry, Teddy. Like you need anything else on your plate."

Teddy hit his morphine button a few times and began to relax. If it weren't cancer that was going to kill him, it would be the morphine. Cancer had spread throughout his body, but the worst was his lungs. He was fighting to breathe.

"Forget the news. I am tired."

"He's tired. He is ripe for the picking. Help the poor boy out and end it for him."

Grimm was now standing side by side with Phyllis, who was sitting on Teddy's bed.

Teddy had a look of shock on his face. There before him stood a man; the well-dressed, handsome, olive-skinned gentlemen that had appeared conversing with Phyllis. Teddy had a coughing fit.

"Oh, yeah, he's ill. Just increase his morphine," Grimm suggested.

"I don't think so. How would I explain that?"

Teddy finished coughing and stared right at Grimm. He opened his eyes wide and

said, "Are you an angel?"

"You can see him?" Phyllis asked, confused.

"I see a man who appeared in this room."

"Oh, shit. He is close to death; that is why he can see me." Grimm explained. "Teddy, I am an angel. I will take you to the other life. Kill him, Phyllis. Get credit. He is dying anyway."

"Please take me. I am ready."

"No, I am not doing it. I can get caught with this one."

"Ah, get your panties wet. Grow some balls, Phyllis." Grimm chimed in.

A nurse walked in and didn't see Grimm standing there. He was invisible except to Phyllis and the near dead.

"I'm here to check his vital signs and change his bedpan. Would you mind stepping out for a minute?" A slender gentleman asked.

Phyllis and Grimm roamed the hallways with several people noticing Grimm. They all had the same look of 'take me' on their faces. It was amazing to watch the eyes follow him as he passed their rooms.

"All, I am saying, young lady, is do it."

"I love that you call me young lady, but stop already," Phyllis requested.

"Last thing. Just suffocate him. His lungs are going out, and he is expected to die that way on morphine. You can speed up the process."

"I'm getting a coffee." Phyllis went to the cafeteria to fetch a nice medium brew splashed with vanilla bean.

Grimm made his rounds and retrieved a few souls. It didn't take him long, and he was back with Phyllis in Teddy's room. Teddy was coughing again and gasping for air. Phyllis couldn't believe she was thinking about it. To kill someone who didn't deserve it didn't sit well with her. She was conflicted.

"Please take me, Angel. I promise I will go quietly." Teddy choked out.

"Phyllis, it is time. There is a pillow. Do it."

Phyllis began to shed some tears because she knew what she was about to do. Her heart said *no*, but her mind said *score another year*. Easy as pie.

"Teddy, are you sure?" Phyllis sighed.

"Yes, I am ready." Teddy had a look of relief on his face.

Phyllis cuffed his nose and mouth. Teddy's fight or flight kicked in when he realized he couldn't take a breath. His body flailed a little and his arms grasped onto Phyllis's. Thirty seconds later, he flat-lined. Beeping sounds pierced the air causing a nurse to charge into the room.

"He stopped breathing!" Phyllis hollered with tears running down her face. She was distraught. Her sadness was genuine. "Never again," she said to Grimm.

Teddy was laid to rest with over 200 people showing up for his funeral. Phyllis was present, but she didn't say much. The family members kept asking her how he was in his last minutes. She replied, "Content. He was ready to go." At least she didn't lie.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Garden

Tamara was Teshia's new best bud, and the two of them couldn't leave well enough alone. Tamara was so convinced that Phyllis committed murder that she pushed the issue with Teshia. It wasn't until Teddy died that they had a clue. The family requested an autopsy for Teddy, which made no sense since he was so sick. They concluded he died from suffocation, but nothing led to Phyllis. He could have suffocated from the cancer since his lungs were full of fluid. Tamara convinced Teshia that Phyllis was present at most of the possible murders.

"Teshia, listen to me. I found something new." Tamara was showing Teshia her evidence. "Here, see — the Gilford case. The old woman fell down a flight of stairs as Phyllis was visiting. What about Eleanor Baxter? Again, Phyllis was present. I have more."

"Stop, I get it. You know my partner isn't going to believe this. I need to get real proof. I have to catch her in the act. Do you understand?" Teshia was firm.

Teshia turned on the living room light. The small lamp on the desk wasn't adequate for reading.

"At least watch her for me. If this is true, I might have the biggest case in Metro history. This will get me noticed." Tamara commented with excitement, as she kissed her secret lover.

The next day, Tamara followed Phyllis, hoping to witness her in the act, but nothing happened. It wasn't until day three that something seemed odd. Phyllis was visiting another friend in her bungalow when the bathtub magically overfilled, causing water to run onto the floor. It gets better. Somehow the hairdryer was on and in the water. Ailene Cavenough was dead. Again, Phyllis called 911 for assistance. The only proof, besides staking out Ailene's home, was pictures of her coming and then the police and ambulance.

Phyllis noticed Tamara following her the day before, and she kept an eye on this peculiar and unfamiliar face watching her so intently. Something was amiss.

Tamara was brazened with her actions, and once they made eye contact, she walked up to Phyllis who was standing next to the ambulance as they placed Ailene's dead body in the back. She held out her hand and leaned in and said, "I know who you are. I am on to you. It's only a matter of time."

"Who in the fuck is this bitch!?" Grimm questioned, as he appeared out of sight of Tamara. This time he was wearing a casual dress outfit of grey and black ensemble. He walked around the ambulance to face his new foe.

"This is my nemesis it seems?" Phyllis commented.

"And you are?" Tamara asked Grimm.

"Cancer, I see. A few months left; I suppose." Grimm commented on the obvious to him; Tamara was ill and dying.

"Who are you, and how do you know I've got cancer?" She was bewildered.

"You can see him?" Phyllis seemed astonished again.

"She is dying, dear. Not too far from death either. You reek." Grimm covered his nose as if Tamara smelled like rotten sewage.

"This is Grimm. He has what you call the gift. He can sense things, read minds, and all that kind of stuff." Phyllis tried to cover up the obvious. Tamara wasn't buying it.

"I get it. This is a joke to get me from turning you in. Get me to believe in E.S.P. and

shit. I don't think so. I'm not bat-shit crazy. I know you are doing it. Once I prove it, I will take you down."

Grimm grinned and bared his pearly white teeth. Phyllis looked directly into Tamara's eyes and said, "Look, bitch, I don't know who you are, and I don't care. I don't know what you are talking about. My friend just died!" Phyllis acted sadly.

"Bullshit lady. I'll get you!" Tamara departed as the police came over to interview Phyllis. Grimm vanished and wasn't heard from until later that evening, when Phyllis thought it would be best to dig in her garden under the midnight moon.

Tamara sped away with a cell phone in hand. She called Teshia.

"She did it again. An old woman just died. I can't believe this shit. You have to do something!" Tamara screamed at Teshia.

"Did you catch her?"

"No, but I was outside staking her out when it happened. Too many people are dying."

"I have something. I got an autopsy report on her previous victim. He died from suffocation and not under normal circumstances. She was the only one in the room when he died. Don't do anything. I will report this properly, and we can arrest her tomorrow."

Tamara didn't listen. Her goal was to find proof, and all serial killers keep trophies from their kills. Phyllis had to be the same. Tamara waited outside Phyllis' house until she left for her Wednesday night bingo down at the church hall. She was a regular and a winner most times. You couldn't pull Phyllis away from Bingo. This gave Tamara enough time to snoop.

A small Prius pulled up a block away with Tamara driving the car. She was trying to be inconspicuous but wearing all black and a hoody wasn't in her favor. She looked like a burglar and in a sense, she was, a cat burglar.

The rear entrance was unlocked, and of course, Phyllis with her forgetfulness, didn't set the security alarm. Tamara couldn't believe how easy it was to get in. She rifled through some trinket boxes on shelves, went through the china hutch drawers, snooped in the kitchen but didn't find a thing. Up to the bedroom she went, and in the closet, she found a shoebox with bracelets, amulets, and rings. Phyllis was keeping possessions just like she thought. Tamara had caught her.

Tamara took pictures and placed the items back in the box. She knew she couldn't call the police and try to explain why she was in some strange lady's house.

A car pulled up, and it was Phyllis. Tamara ran down the stairs to get away when she slipped and fell six steps onto her head. She knocked herself out, and when she awoke, she was strapped down to the dining room table. Phyllis had enough. Phyllis wasn't afraid to kill anyone anymore. Death had crept into her bones.

"The only option we have is, how slowly do I kill you?! I told you I didn't know what you were talking about. I lied. You should have stayed away."

Phyllis slit Tamara's throat deeply to the esophagus, causing her to gurgle and spit up blood. Phyllis had no patience for theatrics or torture. The reporter was figuring things out, and she had to be put away.

"Now what killer?" Grimm popped in. "What are you gonna do with the body?"

"I am going to bury it in my garden."

"Nutrients, nice." Grimm walked over to the dead body and pushed his fingers into her throat. He pulled out her soul and sent it to the great beyond.

"Help me bury her," Phyllis requested.

"Okay, only once. I don't normally do manual labor, but I like you, Phyllis. You're

interesting."

Phyllis and Grimm dug up six sunflowers and buried the body underneath each one. It was a rush job, but it worked. It took Phyllis another hour to clean everything with bleach. Thankfully, her grandson was on the nightshift, so he wouldn't be home until the house aired out. He will never know, but Teshia will.

SM

The night air was a chill sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit when Timothy received the call. He was in his car, smoking again, even though his grandmother said she would kill him if he touched another one. Oh, the irony.

"What?" Timothy asked perturbed. "Don't say anything about my grandmother."

"Listen, Tim, I have proof. We need to talk." Teshia's voice was shaky.

"We are talking. I told you my grandmother wouldn't hurt a fly and her knowing them is a coincidence. Do you understand?" Timothy took a deep drag of his cigarette and flung the butt out the car window.

"Where are you?" Teshia inquired.

"Getting ready to head home. I was getting into the car when you called."

"Don't go home. Meet me at Tamara's place."

The phone line went dead. *Why was Teshia so secretive?* He thought. Getting off early meant going home and getting some sleep, or so he thought. Now he had to drive across fucking town to accommodate the woman who owned his dick.

Downtown was a shady place to live, but if you enjoyed the nightlife of the city, then there is no place like the mid-town scene. Tamara's place was above an old Chinese restaurant, which was now a cake shop, but the old restaurant sign, still hung outside her kitchen window on the second floor.

Timothy arrived as requested and found Teshia's car parked illegally outside the cake shop. Now, he had never been to Tamara's place, but it was the only loft rented above the old restaurant. He parked his car and headed up the steep and long flight of stairs to Tamara's place. The door was open with Teshia standing inside looking for something.

"What was so important you had to drag me out here?"

"Tamara isn't answering my phone calls," Teshia exclaimed.

"Why are we here?" Timothy was getting irritated.

"I told you we have proof of your grandma committing murder. She did it, Tim."

Teshia was now digging through a handbag that was laying on the sofa.

"Teshia, I told you there is no evidence." Timothy went over to Teshia, who was now resting on her knees looking through the bag and put his hand on her shoulder.

Teshia stood up in a hurry and handed him an autopsy report. He glanced at the paper and snatched it out of her hand.

"What is this telling me, Teshia?" Timothy began to read without waiting for a response.

"Just read," she insisted.

Timothy took a few minutes, and his face went from irritated to an ivory white.

"See, your mother must have suffocated the victim. There's more. Tamara found out some interesting things about your grandmother."

"Stop! I need a second. We have no motive, and even though she was there, it still

doesn't link her to a crime. Yes, I read the autopsy, but it only states suffocation and doesn't indicate homicide."

Teshia pulled her phone from her back pocket and noticed Tamara tried to call, but her phone was on silent from when she took a nap earlier in the day. She forgot to turn her phone sound back up. She listened to her voicemail.

"Teshia, hey, I got your messages, but I won't be able to meet you. I left the evidence on the sofa in a black carrying bag. Don't worry, but I am going to confront the old woman. What is she gonna do to me, kill me?" Teshia laughed. "I will be back in an hour so we can prepare a case to give to the police. I need to write my story first though. Shit, I have to go. The old lady just arrived. I love you."

"Was that Tamara?" Timothy asked.

"Yes, but she went to confront your grandma."

"What the fuck for?" Timothy was pissed. "I told you I didn't like her. She is extremely nosy and kind of a bitch."

"She is my friend, and she has a point. Let the cop's sort this out."

"No, I am not letting you two put my grandmother through our court system. I'm done with this."

Timothy stormed out of the house and sped away in his car. Teshia grabbed the bag and looked around the apartment before she locked it up. Teshia and Tamara used to make a joke that Teshia had a key to Tamara's apartment just in case she leaves Timothy for her friend. Truth was closer than fiction.

Down the road, Timothy pushed the pedal to the metal. He was so upset he didn't notice the speed. A police car pulled him over, but immediately they recognized each other from the metro police department. A warning and he was on his way. It helped that he held his detective shield up when the officer arrived at the car window.

Teshia wasn't far behind in hopes she could prevent a showdown at Phyllis' house with Tamara, Phyllis, Timothy, and her involved.

Another cigarette was tossed out the window when Timothy arrived at his grandma's house. Everything seemed reasonable in the rear where he parked next to the garage. The lights were on in the kitchen, and he could see his grandma in the window, washing her hands in the kitchen sink. There was a shovel with fresh dirt leaning up against the garage, near the door, and a hose left out on the lawn. Water was doused around the garden.

"Some late-night gardening?" Timothy was confused until he noticed something odd in the garden.

A piece of cloth was sticking out from under the sunflowers next to the fence. It wasn't the cloth that caught his eye. It was the blood soaking the cloth that snagged his attention. As he stepped into the garden, a familiar voice rang out. Teshia was behind him.

"Tamara's car is a block away. I noticed you weren't in the front, so I came around back. What if something went wrong?"

"I think it already has." Timothy was now holding a bloody arm sleeve.

SM

Phyllis was busy cleaning up her mess she had made while Timothy and Teshia were outside digging up the bloody horror of Tamara's lifeless body.

"You know, you could have done this without being so messy," Grimm chimed in to

break the silence.

"I don't need your banter right now. I need help cleaning things up." Phyllis was washing the floor.

"You know, if you were just a little older, I might think you were happy to see me," Grimm said, with a devilish grin.

"Funny. Make jokes. Help me clean."

"Stop whining. You are almost done." Grimm was watching Timothy and Teshia out the dining room window that faced the backyard.

"Fine, I got this. Go away!"

"Oh, no. I intend to stay for this. I might even make some popcorn because the show is about to get better."

"Gram, you in the house?" Timothy shouted as he entered the back door with Teshia in tow. Both officers had their guns drawn.

"Shit, I am almost done. One more wipe." Phyllis thought she had finished the cleaning as Timothy entered the kitchen.

Phyllis noticed the knife in the sink with blood all over it. It was too late to retrieve it. Timothy noticed the knife. He couldn't force himself to point his pistol at his grandmother. Teshia pushed him out of the way and put Phyllis on her knees with her hands behind her back. She cuffed the old lady with zip ties and sat her at the dining room table. Timothy was beyond bewildered. His innocent and endearing, grandma was a killer. He didn't know for sure about others, but she definitely killed the reporter, Teshia's friend, Tamara.

"Why, Gram, why?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Tell me why you killed my Tamara, you bitch!" Teshia screamed at the top of her lungs. She was so upset that tears wouldn't stop flowing over her dead friend. "I knew you were killing those old bastards. Don't pretend you don't know."

"Gram, did you kill others?"

"I did what I had to do to survive, Timothy," Phyllis said with sadness. "I became quite good at it."

"At what, Gram?" Timothy put his gun back in its holster and couldn't stop rubbing his forehead each time he asked a question.

"Good at killing fucking people. God damn it!" Teshia kicked one of the kitchen chairs, causing it to crash to the ground. Teshia didn't care.

"Call it in, Teshia. Go outside and call this fucking thing in. NOW!" Timothy hollered.

Teshia scowled and scoffed as she pulled out her phone and called 911.

"Gram, did you kill others?" Timothy took the chair that was knocked over on the floor and set it upright.

"Timothy, I was going to die if I didn't give Grimm a soul. I get one year for every soul I give him."

"Gram, are you on meds that you haven't been taking recently?"

"No. I am telling you the truth. I made a deal with the Grimm Reaper. I am serious."

Timothy shook his head, and he was convinced his grandmother had finally lost her damn mind. It was torture for him to see his grandmother in cuffs and held like a criminal. He had to face the fact that she was a serial killer.

"Gram, you will get life for this if not capital punishment. Didn't that cross your

mind?"

"Nope," Grimm popped in. Of course, no one but Phyllis could see him. "The problem was she didn't think. You have, what, seventeen years saved up and now you are going to prison. What to do? What to do?"

Grimm began to dance in the kitchen with an imaginary partner in his arms. He swayed to the right and then to the left all the while being so graceful as to say I am a dancer, not a fighter.

It finally hit Phyllis. She was never protected from her criminal activities. Grimm gave her exactly what she asked for. He gave her life, and she committed the murders. He never said anything about not paying for the crime. She glanced over to Grimm and smiled.

"You got me! Smart and handsome you are," Phyllis said to Grimm.

"I didn't want it to go this way, Gram, but what else can I do?" Timothy cried.

"Oh shit, we have a tear-jerker here. Clean up on aisle thirteen. Bob, thirteen." Grimm was bored.

Teshia walked in and said the deed was done. Within minutes, the house had so many gumballs spinning outside with officers wandering in and out of Phyllis' home. Her house was ransacked, and her jewelry collection from her murders came to haunt her.

Timothy was sitting with his grandmother at the dining room table he had once ate many happy meals at. She had a look that said, "it wasn't me," and the silence of a cat about to pounce on a mouse.

"Gram, why? I don't understand. Why did you kill Tamara?"

Phyllis turned to her grandson and said, "Honey, like I said, the devil made me do it."

Timothy pulled back and gasped. Teshia scoffed and crossed her arms.

"Bitch, we got you. You're gonna fry for this," Teshia whispered into Phyllis' ear.

Phyllis smiled and returned, saying, "You smell nice dear." She wanted to avoid the unpleasantness of her current situation.

"Gram, the devil?" Timothy asked.

"She's lying, Tim. She is trying to get out of this by claiming the devil did it. It's obvious."

Timothy stood up and grabbed Teshia by the arm and dragged her into the kitchen.

"Stop, that hurts." Teshia was trying to break free from his grip.

"Stop harassing my grandmother. I need support right now, not some wild ranting lunatic officer on my hands. Understood?"

"Got it. Next time ask me to walk to the kitchen."

Teshia walked out to help the other officers search the home. Timothy resumed his conversation with his grandmother, who wasn't very forthcoming.

"I love you, Gram, but I don't understand why you did this."

Phyllis was a little smug about her death toll.

Her nonchalant attitude crept into Timothy's bones. His grandmother was a serial killer for sure. He knew it was death for her.

Grimm was bored again, but before leaving, he made one last swipe at Phyllis.

"I'll see you on the flip side!" Then he vanished.

CHAPTER FIVE

Time Flew Out the Window

At the trial, she was convicted on seventeen counts of first-degree murder. She admitted to all the murders being committed within just a few years. She confessed her belief in the Grimm Reaper, but because her crimes were strategically planned, she would meet the injection room.

Psychiatrists examined her, and they all said she was sane, and the Grimm character was her way of fleeing from justice. Soon, time would run out.

"Man, this cell is small," Grimm commented, as he floated in through the bars.

"Where have you been? I have been here for a year, and you haven't said a word. Get me out of here?" Phyllis was insistent and irritated.

"Oh, sweet Phyllis. This dance is done. Think of it this way. They have a free latte on Wednesdays down there."

Phyllis didn't laugh. Her mind was solely focusing on her impending demise. She didn't want to die.

"I can see that humor is not up your alley. Phyllis, if I could help I would but our deal was one life for one year. I honored that deal. I must say, though, that I shall miss my favorite grandma."

"I'll make another deal."

"I have no control over the affairs of man. You shall reap what you sow. Besides, you only have a week before they... you know." Grimm made a gesture of cutting his throat.

"A week?"

"Come now. I'll hold your hand." Grimm began to sing 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' to amuse his sarcastic self.

The news was reeling in anticipation for the world's favorite serial killer grandma to be put to death. She was a media sensation. Reporters were lined up outside the prison with a fleet of vans as far as the eye could see. There were protestors and, oddly, some supporters of Phyllis that day.

Phyllis was strapped to a table, a young woman pokes an IV into her arm, but the lights in the room were too bright. Phyllis was getting a headache. Her eyes adjusted as the table was wheeled down a long corridor. There were four guards, a priest (even though she didn't request one), and a man she didn't recognize.

Prisoners, on death row, all chanted Phyllis' name as she passed by. One said, "I love you, grandma."

"I love you too, William. No more chocolates."

The first set of doors opened to the next corridor. The journey seemed like it took an hour; took four corridors and an outside trip around the back of the compound is what it took to get to their destination.

Phyllis was transported to a small room with IV tubes hanging on the wall. There were three canisters of liquid next to the tubes. Phyllis was aware of what they were. She had seen many crime-shows.

"Do you want me to hold your hand?" Grimm asked of his companion.

"I want to be set free."

Timothy and other witnesses watched her talking to an imaginary Grimm Reaper.

"We all want, want, want, want, but what we get is death. In the end, it's over for your physical life. The after-life is not so bad. You will fit in with a society based on how you lived your life here on Earth."

Phyllis pondered that for a moment as a man motioned for the connection to be made, for the medication to do its dirty deed. Minutes passed, and silence filled the air. The man that Phyllis didn't recognize nodded to the young lady who did the IV as she flipped the switch. Down came the liquid and into her veins.

"I guess I'm fucked," she said, with her last breath.

Grimm waited a few seconds and reached in to take Phyllis's soul. He stopped for a minute and pondered over the last few years. He was gonna miss her, and like a flash of light, Phyllis was retrieved. The last thing heard was the laughter of Grimm echoing through the prison for all to hear. Death is inevitable, but it's the choices you make that predict the future.



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“Thank you so much for reading this short story. Every author needs readers like you. You are awesome! Can, I ask one thing? Please leave a review on Amazon for me. That is how this author can get known. Be blessed.”