

LIZ LYDIC

God Intentions

Case No: V-152-001-2022

Incident: Deceased person

Witness Interview: Jane McConnelly

I was the one who found her. With my legal right to entry, I offered to the cops who were banging on the door that I could just let them in, perks of being the landlord and all. I knew one of the officers, Sgt. Romero; he helped me out when I tried to get a neighborhood watch program together but everyone flaked out, and no, I wasn't going to run the thing myself. I just keep a bat by my door now. Someone wants to complain the day I have to use it? *Take it up with the community watch dogs*, I'll say. That'll be sarcasm.

I didn't know someone could die from Elmer's Glue, and I guess you have to technically say she died from asphyxiation from it, but let's call a spade a spade: she choked on friggig Elmer's Glue, ok? The bottle tipped from the counter or some such and poured into her mouth, and what she was doing on the kitchen floor sleeping is really the mystery to solve here.

A suicide? Not possible. The thing to know about Kate is how obsessed she was with death. I mean, really hear this: the woman was *terrified* about life ending. She talked to anyone about it, believe me, I was one of such individuals who found herself trapped in the laundry room, for example, while Kate turned every subject around to death.

Once, in the carport, I saw these wads of paper that didn't make it to the shared dumpster and so I picked them up and perused. Turns out they were drafts of Kate's self-written obituary. *That's weird*, I thought. *Maybe it's for Facebook*. Didn't know. Don't understand Facebook. Was still scratching my head about it by the next time I saw her when I'm watering my outdoor bonsai and she goes, swear to God, she goes, *I just saw an end-of-life coach*.

Huh?

Turns out there's a kinda shrink that talks to you about death. No joke. Kate says she thought it would help with her chronic anxiety about dying, and real honest, I

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started up the stairs once I heard the word 'anxiety.' Per the coach, Kate started this chanting ritual, talks to herself. This is so bad, saying all this about her. She goes *I'm dying, I'm dying, I'm dying. Kate, stay focused. I'm dying, I'm dying, I'm dying.* Crap went on for three hours every weeknight.

I told her about a thousand times, suck it up and go to church, it'll make things a lot easier, and besides, down at Fellowship Baptist, they do these pretty good theater productions where sometimes a guy goes nude on top. She says she found her own church, creating.

Creating? I asked. *You talking about God's job? Creation?*

But no. She proceeds to show me any and all kinda craft you can imagine made out of apparently whatever she feels like. Shows them to me each time I run into her, which, believe me, I tried to do less as time went on. She was, hands down, addicted to crafting. Literally could not stop, constantly dragging ass-full bags from Crafty Bin and Royal Dollar.

Yeah, it started with the death obsession. Heck yeah. That's exactly the correlation. After the obit, the chanting, the coach, crap was being made in that apartment at breakneck speed.

Not gonna lie, one day, out of itching curiosity, I used my key and looked in there. And let me say: the amount of paper and yarn and bits and scraps and pipecleaners and tongue depressors was one thing. Then there were the finished products, the dreamcatchers, shadow boxes, bookmarks, bunting flags, sock puppets - no crap! - doll dresses, what else do you want? Candle holders, purses made from denim pockets, leaf rubbings, it was a goddamn preschool in there. Painted sea shells, googly eyes glued on to make a face. A birdhouse with a tiny birdhouse outside the regular side birdhouse.

It's... I was concerned, yes, by the volume. I'm not properly explaining the amount of these things, like every kind of craft had a Goldilocks soap opera behind it - a baby version, bloated-ass version, and then a regular one, like she couldn't do just

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one try of anything. If she didn't die from the glue choking her, it would've been that she buried herself in those goddamn crafts.

Another time, I remember now, I go *What are you doing with all your crafts? Donating them or selling them or whatever?* and she goes *I'm going to burn them all*, and after I mentally clocked that I will need to report to the Fire Marshal that there's a potential arsonist on hand, I started asking why she'd make something just to destroy it, then she started telling me about how that's healing for her, and jeez, look at me now, I'm really winding up like a clock. I'm talking to the point of gut-spilling and I feel bad even though I shouldn't. I mean, she's dead, right?

After the burning conversation, I took something, I gotta say that. I have to say it. I took something she made. One of her...It's a bird, a goddamn fabric stuffed bird. The fabric...Who uses a tropical pattern if you're trying to depict the bird? I don't get crafts. But I did take it. It was stuffed, a little bead for an eye, no feathers, just stuffed into that red and yellow patterned piece of cloth stitched to appear like a damn bird. What kind a bird is that supposed to be? The worst thing was that it sat on a hair clip. The heck is going to wear that? Who'd put that on their head?

But, I had to have it. The bird. That damn useless bird. It was going to be burned. Everything was going to be burned. I had to take it.

I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry.

Liz Lydic is a mom, writer, and local government employee in the Los Angeles area. Her work has been published in *McSweeney's*, *Moss Piglet*, *The Belladonna Comedy*, *Ruminate Magazine*, *The Offing*, *Robot Butt* and others. She also does theatre stuff. lizlydic.com