

I Can't Delete His Number

by Kel White

I can't delete his number.

I stare at my phone. Ten sans-serif numbers above his name. The green circle with the phone handle below it. No one's phone looks like that anymore. They should use something different. Like a white rectangle.

It's too hot. I've never felt comfortable in a suit; they're always tight in all the wrong places. Don't like wearing them. Not for weddings, or job interviews.

Or funerals.

I've never felt comfortable in a funeral either, and wearing a suit at a funeral is extra cruel. But then, comfort's not the point. Catharsis is the point, and that's the opposite; everything's cotton-wrapped and muted. Sweaty. Sticky. No wind, no rain, no grey storm clouds. Clear blue sky, thirty-five degrees. The weather doesn't need to grieve.

Blue sky, black suit, white coffin.

His was nice, at least. The funeral, not the suit. I don't know what kind of suit he had. It was a closed casket. I should ask Mum. But she's crying so much her eyes are about to fall out. Dad, not so much. He's just distant. Not looking at anyone, looking through them. I wonder if I look at people or through them.

I won't need it. I should delete it.

Maybe I could call it, leave a message.

Say sorry.

Say goodbye.

Isn't that the point of this?

Staring at a white wooden rectangle waiting for the lid to spring open and for him to say 'Gotcha!' is not a goodbye. Watching dirt shovelled as people leave flowers isn't either. I didn't have a flower. I left a snotty tissue. I dribbled my grief onto a thin slip of paper and I left it with him.



This text is reproduced with permission of the author for use in the SF3/Spineless Wonders Microlit Film Award 2022. Not for distribution. Copyright held by the author.

He won't get to leave a snotty tissue on my coffin. He'll never wonder if he should delete my number or not. He'll never have to see Mum cry, or Dad just disappear into himself. It's not the point. Can't be. He doesn't get to say goodbye back.

I need to leave.

I walk away, seek shade under a tree.

My pocket vibrates. I pull out my phone. My thumb hovers over the green button beneath the caller ID. Ten sans-serif numbers above the name.

His name.

I push the button and answer.



This text is reproduced with permission of the author for use in the SF3/Spineless Wonders Microlit Film Award 2022. Not for distribution. Copyright held by the author.