

## Too Many

5. I walk downstairs one afternoon to find my mom and older brother hugging in the kitchen. I know what has happened before my mom tells me, “Uncle Stan died.”

4. It’s been a while since I’ve gotten a text back from Kara. “Is everything ok?” I ask. She replies something about being at the hospital with her dad.

“Uncle Stan isn’t doing well,” my mom tells me.

6. The funeral is the following Tuesday on a warm September afternoon. My right foot is in a boot cast and my left is in a sneaker. I don’t remember much of Uncle Stan before he got sick. At Chanukah parties he was the famed “Latke King,” but in recent years he lacked energy.

I keep it together through the beginning of the service, but when Aunt Ava and Kara and all of Uncle Stan’s closest friends go up and read stories about him, my face is buried in my hands and I’m leaning on my mother’s shoulder, knowing she won’t care that I’m leaving tears and snot all over her shirt.

3. It’s the end of May, and we’re helping Ava and Stan pack up their things and move from the house on Clematis Rd. to the condo in Weston. I say goodbye to the floral carpet in the foyer that matches a pair of corduroys I wore in the fourth grade, and the small pink loveseat my brother and I used to squeeze under, and the weird green toilet with a rectangular flush hole.

7. Not even three months pass before my mom informs me that Aunt Hannah has died. She is crying and I feel guilty that I am not. I have a chapter to read in *The Odyssey* and a geometry test to study for, but I’m frozen because there is nothing I can do to comfort my mother, so instead of doing homework I’m sitting on a piece of cardboard in the corner of my bedroom and emailing my seventh grade English teacher.

1. Not long after Uncle Liam and Aunt Hannah got divorced, I sent Hannah a message on

Facebook. I was ten years old, and I struggled to understand how I should be referring to her. Was she still my aunt? Was she my ex-aunt? I didn’t see her very much, and I told her that I missed her. She didn’t reply, and years later, I’m thankful that she never acknowledged what I said.

2. It’s the summer before sixth grade, and we’re at our campsite on Cape Cod. I’m playing cards in the tent with my brother and our friend Connor, but our mothers aren’t here. Mom got a call during the magic show and she took off with Connor’s mom as soon as it was over.

Mom comes back and tells us that Aunt Hannah has a rare form of breast cancer. People beat breast cancer all the time.

8. I tell my seventh grade English teacher that my aunt just died. I say I didn't know her well, but I can't bear to see my mom cry. I tell my teacher I love her, and I know now more than ever that life is temporary and we should all be honest from the start.

10. Stan's and Hannah's deaths fade from the forefronts of our minds, but we only make it half a year before my mom texts me one afternoon to pick up schoolwork for the following day. As my brother and I bike home, we both wonder who has died, but neither of us dare to make our guesses out loud.

When Mom tells us that it was Anna, I think at first that she's said Hannah, and I want to tell her that it's been six months already.

I leave school before lunch on Friday for the funeral.

9. In the backseat of our Rav4, I'm watching *Schindler's List* on my mother's phone for extra credit in history class. We stop at Anna's house to pick something up, but it's already Sunday evening so I can't afford to take time away from the film. My friend and I stay in the car.

11. When we see Aunt Ava at Anna's funeral, she gives us each a hug and says, grief-stricken, "Too many funerals." She shakes her head. "Too many funerals." She looks older now than she

ever has.

12. None of this has sunk in. I can't remember the last time I saw Anna. We used to go over for dinner all the time, and while Anna prepared a feast, my mother would fix her computer. We kids would play Nintendo.

Anna's son is just a year older than my brother, conceived by a sperm donor just like we were.

13. Stan. Hannah. Anna. I'm starting to worry that maybe I've reached an age when everyone I love starts to die.

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