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## Say Julia

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PAUL VEGA

## SAY JULIA

Do greet everyone with a strong, steady hand. Do appreciate their condolences. Do make them comfortable. Do pretend you know who all of them are. Do not think of yourself.

Do read your eulogy without crying. Do make the audience laugh. Do tell them you consulted an online article entitled, “How to Write a Good Eulogy,” that encourages eulogizers to use humor. Do not tell them you did this in your sister’s hospital room with her still warm in the bed.

Do not get drunk. Do not get drunk with your dead sister’s friends. Do not get drunk with your dead sister’s friends after the funeral and get dared to make out with your dead sister’s best friend and then make out with her. Absolutely do not have sex with your dead sister’s best friend.

Decide to have sex with your dead sister’s best friend.

Get told: “You kiss just like her!” Get told: “Your sister and I slept together lots.” Get told: “She said you were probably a good lay.” Shudder, laugh, cry. Have no idea how to react. Seriously, because you have no fucking clue.

Spend the next night in your parent’s garage. Go through your dead sister’s things looking for a homemade sex tape directed by your sister and starring the friend of your sister’s that you just slept with and two other girls. Do this because you promised the friend you would find the tape and destroy it. When your dad catches you thigh high in your dead sister’s VHS collection and asks what you’re doing: lie. Lie your ass off. Return to rummaging. Give up and steal all the tapes because there are dozens and

any one could be it. Yes, even the tape labeled: “Buffy the Vampire Slayer – Series Finale.”

That night, sleep in your sister’s room. Pray. Pray to her even though you don’t pray because prayers only go into a vacuum, the same vacuum where she is now. Say, Julia, I miss you. I love you. Say, I never did enough for you. Say, Julia, when you were dying and we all knew you were dying but no one would say you were dying, I’m sorry I didn’t call you. I was scared of you. I was scared of your oxygen tank. I was scared of your empty bottles of Oxycontin, your bedpan, your blue biohazard containers filled with mucus, the way you didn’t always remember who I was.

Say, remember our first Halloween trick-or-treating alone when you lead me through the neighborhood by the hand — you a witch, me a cowboy — the slush cutting through our shoes and curling our toes into stumps while our breaths plumed in front of us like tiny ghosts? Remember how I complained and complained, and we only went one block before I stopped and cried and said, Julia, this is too cold, Julia, I don’t even like candy, Julia, we’re missing *The Simpsons*? And how you yanked me up by the hand and said, you little dumbass, *The Simpsons* is on every Thursday, Halloween is only once a year, now get up. And remember how I got up?

Say all that and say even more. Say you taught me, you lead me, you showed me not to be scared. Say, you went first. Say, you always will.