

*GENRE: Horror*

*ACTION: Riding an elevator*

*WORD: less*

### **I WONDER...**

I'd eventually learn the actual term for my grandma's cause of death: Acute Myocardial Infarction. But at nine years old, all I knew was that something violent and sudden was happening to her.

I remember we were heading to the zoo. I loved the zoo, and Grandma loved watching me watch the animals. We're in the elevator, heading down to the lobby and she seizes up. Clutches at my arms, at her own shirt... Face stricken with terror, eyes wide, mouth foaming with a guttural howl of pain.

Then she collapses, dead before she hits the ground. The elevator doors open.

I don't remember the paramedics or anyone calling 911, but some kindly neighbor shepherds me away from my grandmother's body and sits with me until my mom gets home from work. I wish I could remember their name.

Grandma's terror-stricken face gave me nightmares for years. I'd wake up in the middle of the night screaming. Not fun at sleepovers. I had to go to therapy for it in middle school.

In med school, I'm annoyed to discover that this story doesn't make me all that unique. Many children who witness acute medical events early in life become med students. Our trauma urges us to make sense of the horror of our helplessness.

We all want to know, knowing we never truly can: Could we have saved them?

I still see her face in my dreams. But it's less of a nightmare now, and more of a grim wonder.