

THERE IS NO COOKIE BUTTER WHEN YOU DIE

MADDIE DEPREE

1 No cookie butter.

This is what they want to hear: reasons why you should not die. When they ask this, you may think about wet sand in your hands, or some nice chandelier that you haven't seen yet, or the face of God that you saw in a dog. Mostly, you may think about this: there is no cookie butter when you die. When you die, the amount of cookie butter that you eat is zero. If you want to eat cookie butter, that will be too bad. You will be dead, and there will be no cookie butter, and you will not be able to take your spoon out of the drawer in your dorm and dig into the jar until it is gone.

2 People will not know about the J.

You may also think about this: if you die with your mom's gold signet ring on your finger, nobody will know if the J is for Julia or John. Nobody will care that the J is for Julia. They wouldn't care if the J was for John, either. They wouldn't care if it was for Janet or James or Jupiter or Jam. The point is, you cannot explain it if you are dead, and you need to be around to explain the signet ring if anyone asks.

3 | Never have owned coolgirl sneakers.

You have also not owned a pair of coolgirl sneakers, and if you leave the earth now, you will never have owned any at all. Coolgirl sneakers are like regular high-top sneakers, only they are a thousand times cooler and probably some unusual color, like sea foam or silver or black. Only coolgirls wear coolgirl sneakers, and you cannot wear coolgirl sneakers if you are dead. Nobody would bury you in coolgirl sneakers either. You have to wear them while you are alive, while you can still walk around and get them wet and stomp hard enough to see your own footprints.

4 | More ink.

You may decide you haven't spilled enough ink yet, even though you got pen on your sweatshirt the day after you bought it, and you were mad at yourself until you called yourself sweetheart and decided maybe it was not so bad. You also still have the origami paper you bought yourself for Christmas, and the paper-bag-colored envelopes, and a wax-sealer shaped like a heart, and nobody will use those things to write letters to your sister except for you. If you are dead, you cannot use the paper or the envelopes or the wax. You won't be able to use any ink to write any words, and your sister will get no letters. You have to stick around longer to spill more ink.

5 | Oppressive heat.

You also still want to feel July, and you cannot feel July if you are dead. If you are dead, you cannot bend down to touch your palm to a hot sidewalk, or look at the way magnolias turn dark green in a certain heat. In July, the outside air will be thick and hot and the inside air will be cold. If you are not dead, you can carry around a sweater and pull it on just before you walk into the AC, just before you leave the heat behind.