

Six year old Coralee is standing next to her aunt who is crying. She doesn't know why her aunt is crying, except that she never does. Her crying makes Coralee very uncomfortable. When Coralee looks around the church, she sees that everyone is crying. The choir people are in white gowns with long ,gold strings, and their loud singing hurts her tiny ears. She tries to tell her aunt this, but her words are lost to the loud singing.

The man at the front of the church is big. The words squeeze between his white teeth, and his voice is hurting Coralee's ears. She doesn't want to be there. She looks up to see her aunt with tears in her eyes, and now Coralee is scared.

At the front of the church, there is a rectangle and a person is in it. The person is a woman and she is not moving. Coralee doesn't remember the person, but her aunt says it's aunt Pauline and she's dead. As the line forms to view Pauline's body. Everyone in her family is there, they are all wearing black and they are all sobbing; crying with a sadness that drapes itself on even the bright sunshine coming through the pretty, colored windows. Coralee wants to cry too, but she doesn't know why. When she gets to Pauline's body, Coralee squeezes her aunt's hand—she doesn't want to look—but she does. Her eyes look funny. Her mouth is closed in a weird way and the air around Pauline is very cold. Coralee is afraid and wants to leave. She is hungry, tired and confused.

Now she see's people kissing the dead body. First, aunt Margaret, then aunt Joni; uncle Alvin. It's Coralee's turn and she's scared-she wants to run, but she will get in trouble. She wants to fall on the floor, roll, scream-she wants to leave the church. Kiss the body they say, and Coralee says no. Kiss the body, say goodbye they say, and she says no. lots of people are saying it over and over; kiss the body. And when they speak, Coralee floats away; she rides the waves made by the tears in her eyes. They are pushing her, pulling her, yelling at her, and the music is so loud, and lights are so bright, and then someone says don't make her. They argue. She has to say goodbye they say, she has to touch the body they say. Now Coralee moving away from the body; she is happy and her heart is slowing down. But the tears keep coming. They roll down her chocolate cheeks and land on the black flowers, on her black dress. That was Coralee's first experience with death.