

10

When my grandmother's cross disappeared I called everyone who knew I had it
I couldn't call her
She'd be mad at me
Something about irresponsibility and learning and youth
When my grandmother's cross disappeared
I had to go home
And hope she felt my apology
I'm sorry.
Sorry.
SorrySorrySorry

The house I lost it in was vacant not too long after
My grandmother died when I was young

We made her dinner one night
We massaged and soaked her feet
We watched TV while she rocked
She asked us help her down the stairs when we took her home

9

Goodbye we said

The next day
She was in the same outfit
Her mouth was open
I could smell the greens we made for her the night before
When I touched her, I begged her hand to fold into mine

One more time

I cried

8

Too much change reminds me of my size
I wake up
I stretch
use the bathroom
I sit
Sit sit sit sit
I pray
I leave my hands open on the tips of my knees hoping Ama would grab them
my eyes open to a hummingbird at the tree out my window
And my fingers trap the fly of the spirit I hope that is
I make my bagel with my eggs and my grief and my turkey bacon and my spinach and my
sadness and my loneliness and my salt my pepper my turmeric my garlic powder my meal of
choice for years my closest thing to my mom for years cause death built a home between us
and grief is a bitch of a landlord

We lost one person in

Ways

At 6 teen I was always waiting for the worst

At 6 teen I just wanted my friends but I was at a new school

At 6 teen I would wake up and stretch use the bathroom and cry and eat my breakfast and hug my mom and wipe her tears and wipe mine too and welcome her home from work or let her sleep and eat my oatmeal or cereal or words and swallow enough to get me to the sunset and who said I always wanted to rise again

but what a change that would be

I was all out of room for adjustment periods

I'm already craving a voice I can only remember

5

My grandmother's phone got disconnected not long after the sky chose her and long before her cross disappeared

I frantically called

only receiving reminders that her clothing was the closest thing to her

skin

And even those start smelling like dust after a while

4

I met my best friend 2 months after my grandmother died

A freshman spilled coffee on her our first day of school

I was a transfer student

I laughed so hard

I'm not sure if she knew she saved my life that day

I met my other best friend

And other best friend

And one more all in the same year

Like my grandmother said

"see

What happens when you keep your room clean? See how much space there is?"

She always dreamed of being close to God and my goodness was that a clean woman

3

Stop fucking counting

3

STOP

3

"TEN NINE EIGHT SEVEN / SEE HOW I CAN COUNT SEVEN SIX FIVE FOUR

BREATHE JUST BREATHE THREE TWO ONE ONE ONE ONE ONE ONE ONE ONE

ONE ONE ONE."

I felt that Kenneth

2

My therapist told me about counting

5 things I could see
4 things I could hear
3 things I could touch
2
2
2
What is two again?
Smell

And there go the greens again, and the dial soap
I wish I could *feel* her cross again, the cotton of her orange t-shirt, the cracks of her swollen feet
I want to *hear* her laugh, the oil popping in the pan as she turns hot dogs and corn gourmet, the prayers she wrapped tightly around her neck, the sliding of her wig on to her tender head
Oh to see her, her teeth sitting in the cup, her beautiful gummy smile, her slow walk towards me—hands behind clasped behind her back like she held a surprise, or secret, depending on the day God gave her

1 Day I realized I forgot the sound of my Grandmother's voice
My mom corrected me when I did an impersonation and I found pieces of my heart scattered around my feet
I remember something Hanif Abdurraqib said:
“You have to get accustomed to burying someone repeatedly...there is real gratitude in me reaching for my mothers voice even when I don't retrieve it, because I'm reaching for my mother nonetheless”
My arms will never get tired
My heart might
But there is a joy in knowing I loved someone so much that my heart never wants to stop
There is always an extra beat just for her
I may never hear my Grandmother's voice again
Or hear her palms join together in symphony over my successes
But when my friends clap
And scream joyful noise when life hands me something worth celebration
They get so loud that if I listen close
I can hear “Ah Vicky, there you go”
And there she walks
With a handful of surprise behind her back

