

## Images Burned Into My Memory

1

My grandma's lip quivering, her hand shaking to the same rhythm as she tries to hide the tears. Her voice fills the house, coating it in panic, as she yells *Papa's cut his head open! Call an ambulance!* I rush in to find my brother on the phone, my grandma hovering over my grandpa sitting calmly in a chair, blood dripping down from the top of his head, his white shirt speckled, he's telling her to calm down. When she gets upset, her panic and fear seeps into your skin and digs deep until you feel it everywhere. When my grandpa gets upset, his sadness weighs on you like humidity, suffocating you with the air you breathe. I've only ever seen him cry twice but the memories still swim like fog in my lungs. I'm scared to be around when one of them loses the other. They seem so closely connected by the heart that when one gives out, the other will forget how to pump.

2

My best friend taking up less and less space. My best friend pulling clumps of hair out of her head in clenched fists. My best friend in tears because her boyfriend says cancer makes her look fucking ugly. My best friend bruised from her own fists. My best friend in a hospital bed. My best friend showing me pictures of the inside of her head (*that's my brain that was the tumor*). My best friend kept her chemo mask on her wall as decoration.

3

Every time he showed up at my door again. Every time he used my shoulder as a lifeboat, pushing me down into his ever rising sea. Every time I had to take a knife from his hand. Every time I saw him shake and tremble. Every time I saw his humanity. And every time he spit hateful words into my mouth so I got used to the taste of self hate. Every time he turned around and left and I didn't know if I wanted him to stay gone or return to me. Until he actually left for the last time. This image can now finally make me happy.

4

My own image in the mirror. Past or present, it doesn't matter. I'm always haunting the backs of my own eyelids. Creeping around the corners of my memories. Whether it's pencil thin arms and razor sharp pelvic bones from years past or the too fat neck, too fat face, too thick everything else of the present. Mirrors are doorways to Hell and Hell is this body.

5

Seeing my parents' names on tombstones while they're standing right next to me.

6

I'll see my name on a tombstone one day.