

Good Grief

When I was 3 I lost my first home and my father lost his mind

When I was 6 I lost a boyfriend to Olivia
It was a Tuesday during recess and I thought my heart was broken
Olivia had strawberry hair and dimples
And the boy, he said Olivia would hold his hand
So I soaked my up my loneliness and knew
I'd dream about Olivia that night and not the boy

When I was 7 I lost the curls my aunt said I got from her

When I was 9 my brother killed our pet fish
The fish I worked all day to settle on a name
That fish died nameless because of my brother
I mourned that fish thoroughly and I hated my brother
I hated him for taking him from me before I got to enjoy him
And the next day I had another fish to name

When I was 15 I lost my virginity

When I was 16 my dad died
I don't remember much else from that year
But I remember the flowers, the service and the hands on my shoulder
And I remember the taste of my breath when it was sucked from my throat
Not many people know that taste so I don't bother describing it

When I was 18 I lost another home and my favorite necklace
When I was 24 I lost my body

Now I am 26 and friends with Grief
She is an old friend, filled with both grit and goodness
I turn my cheek up as she always greets me hello with a kiss
And I rub that kiss in

Living in this body

I don't think I'll ever die. Instead I'll just turn a lonely shade of yellow who has had countless diary entries and smile lines and lovers. But until then, death and fear are just words and I'll continue being wedding date pretty. Chaotic and seemingly always in love. Humility is for nostalgic pricks and writing is my most strenuous bodily act. I sit deep in my hips and flex my calves. My chest hallows out and my shoulder blades touch and I morph my body into lyrics that are sung by choirs. Not too loud, just heard and felt seemingly everywhere.

A poem for the little brown girl in south carolina

Little brown girl
The one with the dark curls
The one with freckles

The little brown girl
Whose name is hard so a point will suffice
The little brown girl who gets browner in summer
And your arm will become a measuring tool
Look, I am almost your color

And mama will say other girls are jealous
She knows because she is jealous too
Of those curls and of those freckles
And the way you are everything and belong everywhere
And somehow to everyone

Little brown girl
You will grow roots in this blood soaked soil
Blood the color of yours
You will cry salty tears here and hiccup over caught breath
You will also learn to love here
The way granddaddy loves his mama
Silently and stout

You will want to protect this home
But in the way it didn't protect you
You will grow up big and will hold a mirror to home
Show it itself as it held a mirror to you for 18 years and eternity
Show it its freckles its hills and its man made lakes
Show it the people its has chosen to love and to lose and to forget
Speak to your home, little brown girl, as it as spoken to you, say
Look, I am almost your color

The warm side of the pillow

The tattoo parlor attached to the crystal shop in East Nashville doesn't take walk-ins. I know this because I asked. Before I could put the crystal receipt into my bag they turned me away. Can you believe that? They turned me away. Maybe the smell of my virgin skin kicked the hinges off the doors. Maybe I reminded the artist of a girl that fucked her boyfriend senior year. Or maybe they just were busy. So I went home and imagined the tattoo I would've gotten and changed my mind exactly twice. Then I imagined the girl I imagined sleeping with the tattoo artist's piece of shit boyfriend. I give her hair like mine and a cooler name and think how I wouldn't trust her either. But I would probably love her, if she didn't get too close. I imagine so long I have to check the time and take stock of my own self. A warm body of air, water and now moon. I don't curse the warm side of the pillow, because if anything, it's familiar.