

11:15 PM

Her father's chest leapt from his gurney, his mouth begging to scream, begging to breathe through the blood like a fountain broke in his throat. She sat with his limp hand in hers until the nurse - a towering and tender Black man - asked her to leave the room while he cleaned her father's red-soaked corpse. She woke on the chair across the room. She didn't remember standing or falling into the nurse's arms, only the lifetime she lived adrift in an alien world and a woman's underwater voice bubbling, See? She was just in shock. Ears perked to her pounding socks, but the midnight hallway hushed, dared not whisper when the nurse called to her, Ma'am. You should really sit back down, Ma'am. But she could not when her mother did not yet know. Her heart beat like a noose pulsing, gagging her tighter with each ring of the other line. Her mother's "Hello," sing-songed with delight, with curiosity.

She took a breath.

I can't eat borscht. Not since
November. Even though I used to
enjoy the taste and smell and color. Now
it's different. Now I'm different.
Some spilled from the ladle
onto my hand that held the bowl,
and the warm red and purple

No. PleaseNo. Stopstopstop.
Stop. Please. It's okay. Shhhh.
I'msorryI'm sorryI'm sorry.Please. I'msorryI'm sorryI'm sorry.
Shhh.Shhhhhh.Shhhhhh. PleaseStop. PleaseNo.
No.No.No. Please. Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.
It's okay. Shhhh.Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.No. Please.
Stopstopstop. StopPlease. PleaseStop.
I'msorryI'm sorryI'm sorry.

It's okay. No. Shhhh.
I'm sorry.
I'm sorry.
I'm

The pot slept untouched in the fridge
until blue sprouts climbed the glass
lid, and my partner asked, *Do you want
me to take care of it?* and I said,

Please.

Sorry.

Haunting

Let me know about the pieces butchered in front of you / the wild and gamey breath / the scent that blends into every shirt and every sheet / the shit not suitable for sensitive stomachs / censored in front of your mother / Let me choke on my sobs for someone else / Let me feast on your grief instead / Let me savor your story / the awful tastes / the sour flavor of violence / the muscle and sinew shredded by knife and fork / one slice at a time / Let me gorge on the pain you never dared to share with anyone else / I have practiced not looking away from the body brutalized / split open / I can smell the blood / and I'm hungry for your grief / for the gaping rot in your marrow / for your intestines to unravel at this table / Let's share this meal together / Let our flesh decay holding hands / Let the mice steal our teeth /

Let the Crows Fly Away With Our Eyes