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## Grand mothers

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## Grand mothers

There's a spot inside my body that I cannot reach and it aches in ways that pain cannot explain. I was born with a brain that labors, suffers sickness, split open, ever birthing my manic misery over and over again. No doctor can stitch me back, no medicine conceals the pain, and sometimes it feels like there's no point because I know I'll simply go back into labor again.

I want to rub this spot with anointed balms and oils until it feels better, until I feel the friction that comes from soothing hands helps me to be able to finally withstand what I feel inside. This spot feels physical, yet it is always just out of reach. Yet, I can see the rotten fruit that it bears and the harvest of this horrid fertile hollow is plenty. I cannot stop the spot.

I. Feel. All.

I was born with a hellish scream, trapped like a wild caged animal inside my body. A muzzled Cerberus, shoved into a one inch crate that is sitting on quicksand. I can feel him pressing his body against the tiny prison, each push for escape shoveling him deeper and deeper underground.

This scream burns in my throat like acid bubbles in my trachea. It turns each breath to poison. I want to let it out. I want to puncture a hole so I can let it free, release it to the outside world where it so desperately longs to be, but it seems there is no sound, no pitch, no frequency, no octave that could create the volume I need for it to satisfy me.

I. Feel. All.

And one December this spot, this scream became too real, too visible, too bold to bear. The thickening of the winter air, a starless night to match my dark despair lead me to a hospital bed, strapped down like God's begotten.

A male nurse asked me for my age and name and then I realized I had forgotten myself—numb, I could not feel the nurse swirling the needle in my arm. I do not remember the medicine they gave me, I was too busy silently cursing my spot again for birthing yet another bastard of a baby, for allowing this bitch of a scream I'm longing to release to remain trapped inside me.

I. Hear. Nothing.

*Until all my mothers arrive.*

My mother rushes into the room asking me to explain how I ended up here, and I do, and I am calm until I feel shame. I am calm until I am not. I was calm until I feel All—

my walls shake like a quaking deep inside of my body, my soul was erupting and splitting and everything above me came tumbling down until I felt the weight of myself, the weight of the present, of the future, of the past, and I could do nothing but hide under the thin, white hospital sheet, curled into a ball and rocking in the bed on the balls of my feet. I feel my mother's hand on my back. I feel the hands of all my mothers on my back.

#### I. See. All

their shadows through the thin white hospital sheet. I am beyond screaming. I am beyond crying. I have become a banshee and this banshee is a conjurer and this rocking, her ritual and she has begun a séance. Banned, she finds the limits of herself she grips her hospital band and she feels her mothers rub her through the sheet. They sooth her through the sheet, they find the spot that she cannot reach and in this moment she is all, in unison they commence a chaotic chant:

*Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri. Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri.*

“Cry, baby...”

*Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri. Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri...*

“Cry the tears we never got to shed. Cry for every scream that has ever been muffled. Cry, because you've been dying since the day you were born. Cry, because you love when aint got love left to give. Cry, because you'll never see that love returned...”

*Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri. Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri...*

“Cry, so that the burns, the cuts, the scars, the bruises that you cannot touch may be exposed. Cry, to grow the crust that forms around them like new earth. Cry, because you must get hurt to heal. Cry, because you must be ripped open first before you can scab. Cry, for every cell in your body, nourish your skin with these tears so it may grow again. I free you from imprisonment but you must cry, for every bar you must break in your cell...”

*Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri. Yaya yaya r̀̀l yaya yaya igbe cri...*

“Cry for the ones who live. Cry for the ones who died. Cry for the ones stuck in between. Cry for those who you have never met, but are now by your side. Cry up to the heavens. Cry down into hell. Cry, because we love you. Cry, because you gotta love yourself. Grieve everything then grieve nothing but yourself. Cry, so that God can hear you. Cry, because this is your testament. Cry your truth. Flood yourself tonight in covenant that you will never flood again.”

i. felt. the shaking—

stop. I was myself again. I uncovered my head and I was left with one mother, in flesh, who sought to hold me. I felt completely drained. Weak. Like a tree left leafless, broken, and branchless from a hurricane. I was stripped. I was washed. I was made new, baptized, pure—

And I felt everything.