

Grief

WYATT BACKER

My grandparents were killed by ailments heretofore unstoppable by the collective human consciousness.

1a. My grandma had ALS. The electricity in her body was torn from her. The ability to do--to act--was torn from her.

1b. My grandpa had cancer of the pancreas. It's treatable if you catch it early. You don't. Per the advice of doctors and family, he used radiation to extend his life by a few months and die in pain.

2a. When my grandma died, I went outside to shoot free throws. She had been dying for so long. I was maybe 9 years old. Finality doesn't exist when you're 9. I resumed the quotidian.

2b. I don't remember what I did when my grandpa died.

3a. My grandma's funeral was the first time I saw my Dad cry. I think that is what grief is, and what finality is. Finality is when Dad cries. A storm threatened my grandma's burial. While we waited for it to pass, I picked up a rock outside the church where we sang to her, thinking it could be something sentimental. I lost the rock on the way home.

3b. My Dad cried at my grandpa's funeral. Hypothesis confirmed. I was something like 13, and a pallbearer. It's much lighter than you'd think. No rocks to pick up this time. I think everyone was wondering if they were next.

1c. In the basement of a church in Clarksville, Iowa, the Backers and the Hennings would get together to play Backer Bingo. There were more Hennings in attendance, but Backer Bingo sounded better. Grandma and Grandpa were still alive. The fluorescent lights crushed me. There was glittery tile that was at one point cream colored and was at present rotten cream-colored. The game chugged along, and the prize for this round was a trucker hat with the local Lions club logo. I think everyone was wondering if they were next.