

I found my people the day my mother went into the ground. At the funeral, a man, whose face I can barely remember now, shoved a paper into my hand. The only piece of him that my memory held onto was the way his eyes drooped but still seemed alight with ambition. It was startling to see because, in the multitude of times that I had avoided meeting my gaze in the mirror, it always came back to that if I did, I would find nothing but emptiness. He gave me an infinitesimal amount of hope that stopped me from tossing out the small slip of paper when I dug it out of my suit pocket later that night. What he wrote on it was less than an invitation, but I arrived at the location at the time that the slanted handwriting instructed me to the next day.

We all dressed the same, and it was easy for me to get lost in the crowd, but that was not the reason that I fell in love with the surrounding people. The moment my mother died I knew that I was losing my mind in the sanest way possible, slowly and consciously, but these people had already reached their insanity. They raised their hands and hollered when the words of the man draped in black touched them. They were insane, but they were organized and they purposefully gave up on their logic for lives full of safe desires. I found it beautiful. So, when prayers resonated through the room, I echoed them, following in all their moves until I became free to experience their structured madness. And I gave myself over to it until it changed from madness to belief.

Because when they spoke of God, I could see her. The way her curls framed her face, and how the freckles across her cheeks looked like paint splatters. I could remember her deep voice, and when I closed my eyes, I could hear her singing away my nightmares. When I was with my people, I knew that she had not left forever. And I knew that even though we locked her body was away and covered her in the dirt, she was somewhere else. And wherever that was, one day I would be there too, and together we would raise our hands, throw our heads back, and feel blessed by the divine.