

In this collection, I am going to introduce a few female characters or family members to you. One of them I have a personal love for my maternal grandmother who is of the south but found herself and my grandfather in the North of this country, Mrs. Josie Marie Grandberry-Linnear. On our way we will also learn the voice of Dixie, the governing narrative of the south and a child whose name we do not know but whose voice has just been found. I met a handful of Dixie's who had a real problem with me being a black girl who grew up in a home with both parents and hair that was all mine. Many southerners don't believe in her presence but I spent a lot of time with Dixie and her deFacto worldview.

Dixie

The audacity
To be black
And present
And in white folks space
How dare she?
With her natural hair
And thighs all out
Don't she know decency?
Don't she know they can hear her?
Don't she know racism ended in like 1963.
it's all about bootstraps here
Had the cheek to ask us what we've done to her brother's body
Like it was important enough to keep up with
Don't she know we got quotas to fill
Don't you see we got empty spaces in jailhouses
We got you so good
you didn't bother to ask about your own body?
Affirmative action got her walking around like she owns something
Don't you know we own you.
Can't you see you're our black girl?
How dare you?
Guess that's the problem with privilege
It's hard to unlearn.
With that body
stereotypical able-bodies
It's frightening to understand Justice –
With her ailments and all
Crippling it is
judged by a woman that can't see color
That won't see colors it was built by
Served by, Colors it was built with, built on
Bloodied by
The nerve of it all
To be wondering and asking
To be anxious about what no one knows
As if they knew,

As if it mattered.

My grandmother's favorite word is suga poochie. It is a hospitable term of endearment. After recently coming out to my family, I remembered all the lessons of self-love that make us beautiful. I once mistook these fables for scripture that reminded me I was not a broken black girl and that one day someone would love my shenanigans. I never took notice of those women who were loving me already. I know look towards the one I love now and the ones who made me who I am.

Grandma says Boys are like taxi cabs

And I'm built like a Grandberry with legs made for taunting

Made for talking about

I believe her

Grandma says there are Plenty fish in the sea

And That's why you pearls and perfume on your wrists to catch em

She say my Butt don't say im of this family yet but skinner say I started it all

I believe her

Grandma says Crowns don't always do us justice

And teeth shole do have something to say about you, even if they aint yours

Grandma says You can take country of a girl but can't the sweet out of her tea

I believe her

Grandma says use Ajax on your knees to take the black off

To remove the journey from them thighs

Bleach the roadmap of stretchmarks

Grandma says take you a Bath to soak in

Paint your nails as if you'd never gotten them dirty

Grandma says She lost ten pounds but still look like coffee cake and honey and Suga poochie and darling

But I believe her

Her Momma had 10 babies,

1 stillbirth

she the youngest

She the one at the back of my shows like

That's my grand baby

Whoop, Whoop, Whooop

she's a pistol

That baby got boy problems but she'll be alright

I believe her

She the one Loved one man since age 18

Give the world 5 babies

1 stillbirth

1 set of twins

Grandma says family will show you the importance of maiden name after you are married

Love will Show them How you can sit in the same house with that one man

til he hit you

Til you marry

divorce

then marry that same man

But grandma don't understand I know God knows exactly what he's done
That he gave me this whirlwind of a woman for guidance
For refuge
And Grandma don't always say everything right but
I just been watching the way she been movin
Just been watching the way she been living
I know she think I'm not listening but hear everything Grandma says
And I believe her.

It took a long time to find this voice and it's still not perfect but I believe it should be heard back home
and here too.

For a while now
I've been trying to use the word "belligerent" correctly
Figure if I commit it to memory
the way I did those grade school vocabulary words
I'll get it right
To do so
I must liken it to things or experiences I cannot erase from memory
Belligerent
Engaged in war or conflict
Like children picking dolls
Like black women and backsides
Like Twitter activists in a tangle
In an argument that only makes noise
Like a protest that looks more like riot
Or a cause that is degraded
Dumbed down by the separation of its own people and
picked apart by the opposition
the propaganda sewn into babies
The fruit Plucked from the tongue with explanations that go simply
"She good because she white"
"She bad because she black"
the way a system works with audacity to call itself by a vocabulary word
I am learning what burnout feels like.
It is 101 degree weather at 2pm in a Bible Belt city
It is the hot of tea right after being poured from the kettle
The hollow heat of its previous home
Eating flaming hot Cheetos
on the school bus in the mid of May
It's a church house when the devil steps in
The first break of sweat at the gym
The way your scalp feels after momma hits you accidentally with the hot comb

Or concrete on bare feet
after the sun says good morning
After she has stared into the sky for the day
Belligerent
Is finding different ways describe and analyze this skin
Is the way this skin says "No"
The way this hair says "hell no"
But somehow
the way these curves yelp "yes"
Before my mouth does
Belligerent
Is warrior
Is war cry
"Whether it be in our bellies or at the end of our torches"
Is my people set on fire
In a church house
In the front lawn
Or while seated crossed legged and silent tongued in front the dept of justice.
Belligerent is the way we start the day
The way history repeats itself and that's just how it goes
The way history makes hip hop a bunch niggas with no soul
The way history has always made my people out to be "angry"
But forgot that this has made us warriors in a war we did not ask for. In a war cannot say No to.
It's the way this mouth says no
The way this armor says fuck you
Engaged in war or conflict
Belligerent
Battle
Black