

3.

Silence means the click of thumbnail against wooden rosary, the turning of thin pages, the crack of old knees genuflecting. The scrape of metal spoon against ceramic bowl.

The shuffle, the limp, the hustle of ambulation.

Coughs, sneezes, sniffles.

Silence means the wet hesitation of resistance a potato makes with each pass of the knife. The dry rip of collard greens removed from their stalk.

It is hearing a throat swallowing milk. A throat swallowing tea.

The dry sockets of teeth chewing bread.

It is hearing the air around hands as they perform ritual, as all men move in the same pattern. A touch to the forehead, to the heart, to the shoulders. As hands come together to touch palms.

Silence means hearing the fabric around our bodies, the swish of robes. It is the strike of a match and the fizz of flame catching. Of breath ending flame before it reaches fingers.

The moon-fed movements of the ocean and its response through the cedars.

The falling of those cedar's needles or the thump of the cones.

And always the *tsk tsk* of straw brooms cleaning some corner, some hallway.

Silence means hearing bodies turning in narrow beds, the scrabble of mice feet and the muted whoosh of a raptor.

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This silence meant I was not alone.