

Sundays at Grandma Josie's

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“If I have one more wrinkle,” my grandmother would loudly say, “I will have to carry it in my hand.”

I often hear people and ideas expressed this way throughout my childhood. Looking back, I wish I didn't take my family and their expressions for granted.

Like every other Sunday, for as long as I can remember, my mother would wake up all four of my siblings and me extra early. Being the punctual woman that my mother is, she would make certain we were never late for our weekly 11:30 lunch. My great-grandmother was known for starting lunch at exactly 11:30, not a minute before, nor a minute after. The earth could shake and seas could overflow, but spaghetti, eggs, and meatballs would be served.

As I cautiously open the door upon arrival to my grandmother's house, sloppy lips and breath-taking hugs are destined to come my way. All too soon, I am pushed through the overcrowded house and expected to receive whatever greetings are thrown my way.

“Who's there?” my great uncle Paul shouts. He then blindly reaches out to shake my hand.

Like uncountable times in my past, I yell my name, “Trent!”

“Who,” he yells, “Trey?”

I shyly correct him, “No, Trent” and move on.

In the corner of my eye, I notice my grandmother sitting on the faded blue, floral printed couch talking with my known-to-be-forward, Great Aunt Patsy.

“Virginia is looking old,” she informs.

“Pete’s Virginia?” my great aunt yells.

“No, Sal’s Virginia. I don’t know why she’s still with him,” says Grandma.

“She’ll be with him until Madonna has a hit movie,” my aunt snaps.

During the chattering commotion and the releasing of recent gossip, my great grandma Josie is straining the spaghetti over the scratchy steel kitchen sink. She then places the tomato sauce-stained plates on the over polished wooden table. She stops and smiles as I make my way into her arms, warm and soft with age. “Put out the forks and napkins,” she tells me. Not long after, she signals for everyone to eat.

Meatballs, eggs, pig lips, and stinky cheeses crowd the table.

“Pass me a meatball,” Grandpa Joe says, “and I’ll dance at your wedding,” a phrase which he is known to use.

I smile and pass him the rounded lump of meat. In the background, my grandmother is heard cursing the red sauce jumping at her white shirt. It’s an understood rule on Sunday to not wear white of any form, for the laws of nature ensure that such a phenomenon will occur. Eventually, the talking stops and only the clanking of forks and plates is heard.

As soon as “our stomachs protrude from their wrinkles,” as my grandpa would say, the men make their way to the television, and the women to the kitchen sink. Only the most secretive and juicy gossip is heard over the washing of pasta-stained dishes. My cousins and I quietly hide behind the kitchen door to secretly update on last Sunday’s gossip.

As I grew older, I understood more and more of what they so anxiously whispered over.

Right before the mosquitoes emerge from hiding, my mother rounds us up and tells us to say goodbye to our now heavy-eyed family. I say my farewell to my grandmother. Hugging her,

I notice the small stain that she had fussed about only hours earlier. I then kiss my great grandmother goodbye. Until next Sunday I think, but one day Sunday will not come.

As a child, I assumed that my family will always be part of my Sundays. The truth is that with each passing Sunday, the time I have left to spend with my family grows shorter.

Nevertheless, I look forward to Sunday.