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the way we call each other when someone dies

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the way we call each other when someone dies

Emily Brannon

my grandmother is usually the one to call
I will know when I answer the phone
that someone we love is gone
even though she will ask for my mom
instead of telling me who we've lost
because this tone of her voice
is reserved
for news like this and nothing else
unceremonious and brief
she will tell my mother who died
and when and where and what time the funeral is
and when she has given my mother the details
and several people of her own to call
my grandmother will call someone else
who might want to come to the funeral
because the way we call each other when someone dies

the blunt and tired voice of bad news

with gentleness clinging hard

is one of the last ways we have to say I love you

to a person now gone