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JUST FOR ME

Mielle Hubbard

The first video I took is a twelve-second long, vertical shot of the New Jewish Cemetery in Krakow, Poland. I was on a weekend trip to Poland with two friends while on my study abroad in Berlin, and on our way to the bus going home, with plenty of extra time, we decided to take a detour. I took pictures but couldn't capture the solemnity of the cemetery, or what it felt like to be surrounded by innumerable slabs of stone so tightly-packed and weathered that I couldn't read any names beyond the second row.

The video jostles with my steps and is centered on a long path littered with cracks and potholes with no end in sight. On either side are the grave-stones, all covered with moss and flowers and sitting askew. Among the stones are deciduous trees, bare and skeletal in February but reaching up to a bright blue sky. Shadows stretch across the pathway and cover the gravestones, making the moss in the sun seem to glow. My friend murmurs unintelligibly at the very beginning of the video, and then it's the sound of birds singing and my slow steps for twelve seconds.

That was in 2016, and since then I've taken videos of a Russian marching band playing in St. Petersburg, my brother watching Bob Ross with a chicken, rain falling into a creek in Stanley Park, my dad doing jumping jacks in our front yard, and water lapping the shore of Flathead Lake.

One starts with a landscape view of my mom's garden in the rain, an untamed mass of green leaves dotted with orange tiger lilies and pink poppies. Wooden lawn chairs and a homemade mobile chicken coop sit soaked on the grass and trees cover the background. The camera slowly sweeps to the right, showing the brick path and my dad's bright red truck in the driveway. More of the garden with more poppies come into view, then the hill leading down to the shed with the white door and the forest just beyond. All the while, the rain gently patters on the leaves, the roof, my raincoat. Then the camera swings quickly to the right, all the way to the open front door and my brother, Reuben, coming through it, taking up half of the frame with his huge glasses and bright plaid shirt under a thick winter coat. As the image focuses on his face, he purses his mouth to let out a strange sound from the back of his throat, "Kkkhh-kkeehh." His eyes cross and the video ends. The whole thing lasts eleven seconds.

The videos are uneventful and unflattering; they're the moments I would forget if I didn't record them. I watch them alone, when I'm sad. Or when I want to feel sad.

Three men and one small woman, all wearing button-ups and ties de-

spite clearly being at their own house party, stand behind a pong table with red cups set up for a game of beer pong. Colored lights fall into the top of the frame, and the housemates fall over each other. “Focus, damnit!” Grant, on the left, yells. Ticia giggles, Liam says, “okay, okay, okay,” and they all straighten up and smile. Seven seconds.

My dad stands on a short stage, the camera resting behind a railing so he can't see it. Pink, purple, and turquoise lights point at the ceiling and illuminate beer signs at the Rocky Mountain Roadhouse's, a tinny instrumental of Peace Love and Understanding plays in the background. He stands on his toes to dance, bending his legs and swaying, and singing. “So where are the strong,” his voice is loud and confident, “And who are the trusted? Where is the,” his voice starts to strain as he belts, “Haaaaa-aaarmony? Sweet harmony!” Fourteen seconds.

The Flathead River rushes from the Hungry Horse Dam at the bottom of a ravine lined with bushes and trees. The camera sweeps up and to the right to my grandma on her tip-toes leaning over the concrete wall with her hands clasped, hair pulled back in a butterfly clip, looking straight down at the rock wall and not the water. “These actually aren't very interesting rocks,” she says casually, “They're all the same thing.” She turns away from the camera and the camera lowers to her feet. Nine seconds.

Reuben stands in the living room, the kitchen behind him, holding a tiny brown chihuahua close to his face. He takes his lips off the top of the dog's head to say, “Oh my gosh, Mike,” he sounds close to tears despite his huge smile, “You little baby boy.” He kisses Mike, who looks up and licks Reuben's lips. Reuben recoils, Mike looks down, and he kisses Mike on the top of his head. Fourteen seconds.

My family walks away from the camera on a hiking trail in the Swan mountains, my parents behind my aunt and uncle and cousins. My mom has a saggy old blue backpack, my dad wears jeans cutoff at the knees and a beige Camelback, and they're holding hands. Three seconds.