

## TRANSCRIPT

### ONOMATOPOEIA

#### EP: My Grandmother in Queens

[TAPE] City street sounds. A bell rings.

**ANASTASIA JOHNSON:** I'm at the corner of Broadway and 21st street in Astoria, Queens. Staring down a brown brick building. It's a low-rise. It stands alone. Like a child amidst adult commercial spaces. I wouldn't have noticed it if it weren't for the blueish-silver door. Well, *that* and the sign. "Psychic readings by Sandra." There's a pit in my stomach.

**PSYCHIC SANDRA:** Who is it?

**AJ:** Hi, it's Anastasia.

[TAPE] A buzzer sounds.

Booked the appointment for four? Thanks.

I'm invited inside. It's a curved walk-up. I hear Sandra but I don't see her. Halfway up I'm realizing my sweater and leather jacket are a bit much. I'm breathing. Heavily.

As I lift my sunglasses, the fog from the breath below my mask lifts too. I reach the top. Sandra appears. She shows me to her reading room. A mirage in psychedelic color. With rainbow hues cast all around the room. There are crystals in the corners, towering tarot decks and at the center of her table? A giant crystal ball. We sit on either side of it. Sandra asks which reading I'd like. But I'm not here to hear about my future. I'm here to hear about someone from my past.

I'm Anastasia Johnson and this is Onomatopoeia—a podcast about the people and places of New York. In this episode, I attempt to visit a loved-one who has been coming to me in my dreams. Join me on a trip to meet "My Grandmother in Queens."

It's hard to explain, but my maternal grandmother and I always had a special connection. We had a way of being in tune with each other without ever having to say much at all. It didn't really

make sense. I lived in Canada. My grandmother lived in Jamaica. Miles away. We would see each other - in person - maybe two or three times a year? Just like she saw her other grandchildren.

But she was a highly spiritual and devout Christian. Her intuition? Always spot on. You couldn't get a thing past her no matter how hard you tried. I'll never forget this one time I was visiting. She was about to take me out. Apparently my hair looked crazy. She told me to brush it. When I said I already had, she told me to go put on a hat.

That was the thing about my grandmother. She was firm, but never mean. She housed a force to be reckoned with but shone a calm, radiant light.

I don't tell Sandra - the psychic - any of this.

[TAPE] Breathing in and out.

**PS:** So I definitely feel the close relationship. Like not taking you as a granddaughter, but more taking you as a daughter.

**AJ:** My grandmother passed away on April 17, 2018. It took weeks for my family—literally scattered around the world—to get their travel plans together. So, the funeral wasn't until the end of May. Since passing away, my grandmother has appeared in my dreams more than any person I know. Dead or alive.

Sandra touches on all of this. Says my grandmother had a lot of alone time. My grandfather's work also kept *him* away from her. He worked in Canada for over 15 years. She had told him to move back to Jamaica sooner but his sickness crept in and it was too late.

I also ask Sandra about past life regressions. That's the reading where you learn what versions of you existed before life now. Sandra tells me that in my past life, I was a man. That I lived happily with a spouse and five children. For me, the idea of children is a total nightmare. But I don't have to worry about that now.

I may not have needed to see a psychic or have a mediumship session done to tell me what I knew before. But in the moment. The moment of someone tuning into you. Speaking truth they

could never really have known. There's closeness. A sense of wonder. Undeniability. And maybe, just maybe, my grandma at that blueish-silver door.

This episode of Onomatopoeia was created by me, Anastasia Johnson. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Other music by Blue Dot Sessions. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michell Wilson.