

Ancestors

by [Lisa Dordal](#) in the [July 2023](#) issue

My parents are ghosts now, ancestors
who enter my dreams, sit with me in a circle
during morning meditation. We talk about small things—
the keys my mother dropped in the snow
on her walk home from work. The chili
she'd made as an antidote to the cold.
I tell them I'm studying mysticism. I tell them stories
about St. Theresa—how, as a child,
she began to walk in circles
when she first heard the word *forever*,
repeating it over and over—*forever*
becoming flesh, flesh becoming word.
I tell them we've finished dividing their belongings
and that I've hung the seagull painting
in our living room—how, as a child,
I'd always thought the boulder to the right of the seagull
was the long, sad face of a basset hound,
while the boulder to the left was Jesus—
how he must have appeared in my book
of Sunday lessons—delicately sketched
with room for the imagination. Of course,
they're still there—Jesus and the dog.
I can't un-see them. Though the sun,
in the painting—more like the moon on a cloudy day—

is easy to miss.