

The Sheets of Our Youth

A Poem in Response to My Sister's Post on Facebook

The sheets where we slept were king-sized
for those eight years we shared the battered mattress,
and we fought over them
as though they weren't sufficient for our child-sized frames,
(as though each other were the threat of thievery in bed.)
They were hand-me downs to our mother from hers:
The cast-offs for a daughter who married ill (twice),
Laundered and dried and ironed
For those years before we got them
By Lizzie, who kept our Grandparents'
Basement smelling like starch year-round.
The sheets of our youth were manufactured in the 1950s
In textile mills in the Carolinas, or Virginia
From cotton grown in Texas, or Alabama,
On farms that were owned by men and not yet incorporated.

So when you announce you are looking for
The smooth, crisp coolness of
The sheets you remember from your youth?
You are misguided by terminology and technicalities.
Percalé? Low-thread count? Irrelevant.
You will not find those sheets in this or any lifetime.
But since you are looking
May you find something to fill the space,
To spread over a woman's place of rest
With all the texture of memory.

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My body of dissidence

by Rhea Ashley Hoskin

Where I once wished you would shrink, you continued to grow
And where I wished you would grow, you shrunk.
When I needed you to be brave, you were vulnerable.
And when I anchored my self-love in your strength,
You became weak and fragile.
Ached under the weight of your years.
I can rip out your hair, wax, pluck or shave,
but you will regrow.
I will regrow
And I always already am.
When I wanted to quit, you kept going
Air in my lungs, blood in my veins.
The ultimate rebel, my body.

Your aches, your pains
that expose a lifetime of war upon you.
Still you persist
In a world that subdues your rebellion at every turn
And host to a mind that befalls to toxic beauty culture
You never gave up,
To grow and exist precisely as you saw fit,
And to resist every restraint the world has put upon you

Thank you for showing me all the ways that I am resilient,
For keeping time through the lines on my face,
So that I never lose track,
So that I don't take tomorrow for granted.
Thank you for teaching me the ways that I persist,
The ways that I am resilient
And the ways I prevail despite myself.