Combing

BY GLADYS CARDIFF

Bending, I bow my head and lay my hands upon her hair. combing, and think how women do this for each other. My daughter's hair curls against the comb, wet and fragrant— orange parings. Her face, downcast, is quiet for one so young.

I take her place. Beneath my mother's hands I feel the braids drawn up tight as piano wires and singing, vinegar-rinsed. Sitting before the oven I hear the orange coils tick the early hour before school.

She combed her grandmother Mathilda's hair using a comb made out of bone. Mathilda rocked her oak wood chair, her face downcast, intent on tearing rags in strips to braid a cotton rug from bits of orange and brown. A simple act preparing hair. Something women do for each other, plaing the generations.

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