

Something strange happens to the body when an afro is born

There once was a young girl with an afro this big but not that big and so the afro was raised in secret, kept quiet under winding rows and interlocking locales until she gave it the go-ahead to burst forth and enter the world with spectacle and vigor. Sometimes the girl might crane her neck and figure, no, she's been presumptuous. You're premature, the girl says. Her afro hides away again, a hibernation in hope of a more promising yield next season.

In the morning, the girl begins: unravel unravel unravel unravel-*ing* the slumberous strands to see what they've made outta seven or so hours a' getting their shit together. The little girl asks if nighttime's painstaking paid off. Her afro, muffled, cannot answer. On Wednesdays the girl and her afro go to yoga. They inhale the drenched air and contort themselves to a better tomorrow. They shall know no thirst, the girl and her afro.

What lessons from big to little must the girl learn; or teach? Her afro kicks her out the house, tells the girl not to come back till her lungs are burning. The girl loves soul food and the afro does too but says no to all the good stuff: potatoes, grits, greens *unless* dressed to measure in drips not dousings. Moisture can be the enemy sometimes.

In the winter the girl's afro turns into a brittle old woman. The girl packs her up ever so slowly, turns off the lights, and heads to ecstasy. These months of hedonism are unknown to the tightly wound woman held close to her scalp and she cherishes them. She finds new companions who hate yoga but love to boom shake twist till the lights burn out.

The afro always finds out, of course. Like clockwork the fragile lady reawakens as the thick legged Auntie who know you done wrong. The afro is never mad. Only disappointed. Shame drips into the young girl's eyes. She leaves her plate. "I'm full."

The girl is envious. Why can't you be like her, she cries and her afro feels sad and the girl feels sad because they are one. It's me, not you, she tells her afro and takes her to the shower—lather/rinse/oil/sleep. Forgiveness comes easy when it's all routine. Her afro is patient.

She still thinks about the others though.¹ The others are everywhere. Her afro takes its time but a girl has to expedite things. *She* is now excess. She doesn't have room for this now. No, not that either. If it wobbles get rid of it. Everything must go. She is not a body, she is a vessel. A servant to something bigger. A higher power. Afro. Her shepherd. Her wet. Her shelter. Her faith. Her magic. Her liberation. Her possible. Her visible. Her pride. Her personhood.

1. Her afro cannot, surprisingly, read the girl's thoughts, but only sense them as tremors.