

Lipstick

Category: Hands

written by Linda Koebner | June 8, 2016

My mother's scent, Replique, always entered my bedroom an instant before she did. The message my nose carried to my brain, then on to my heart, was "She's going out tonight."

She would first sit on the edge of my mattress. The comfort of her nearness would always be overshadowed by the sadness that I knew would overtake me once she left me alone. But we both pretended it didn't matter. She'd say all the requisite things like "Sleep tight" and "See you in the morning" and "I love you." And then she would kiss my hand and be gone—leaving behind a waxy, deep-red imprint of her lips, pressed onto my skin.

Fifty-five years later, I sat on the edge of her mattress, my arms still cradling her. It had been a long dying. After ninety-nine full years of life, she had been reluctant to leave.

Her hands—hands that had taught deaf children, carried a small bag when escaping Hitler, sewn on buttons, braided my hair, shaped meatloaf, held lovers and stroked cats—now lay silent. I uncurled myself from her body. But before I went out of the room, I pressed my lips onto her hand, leaving a waxy, deep-red imprint.

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