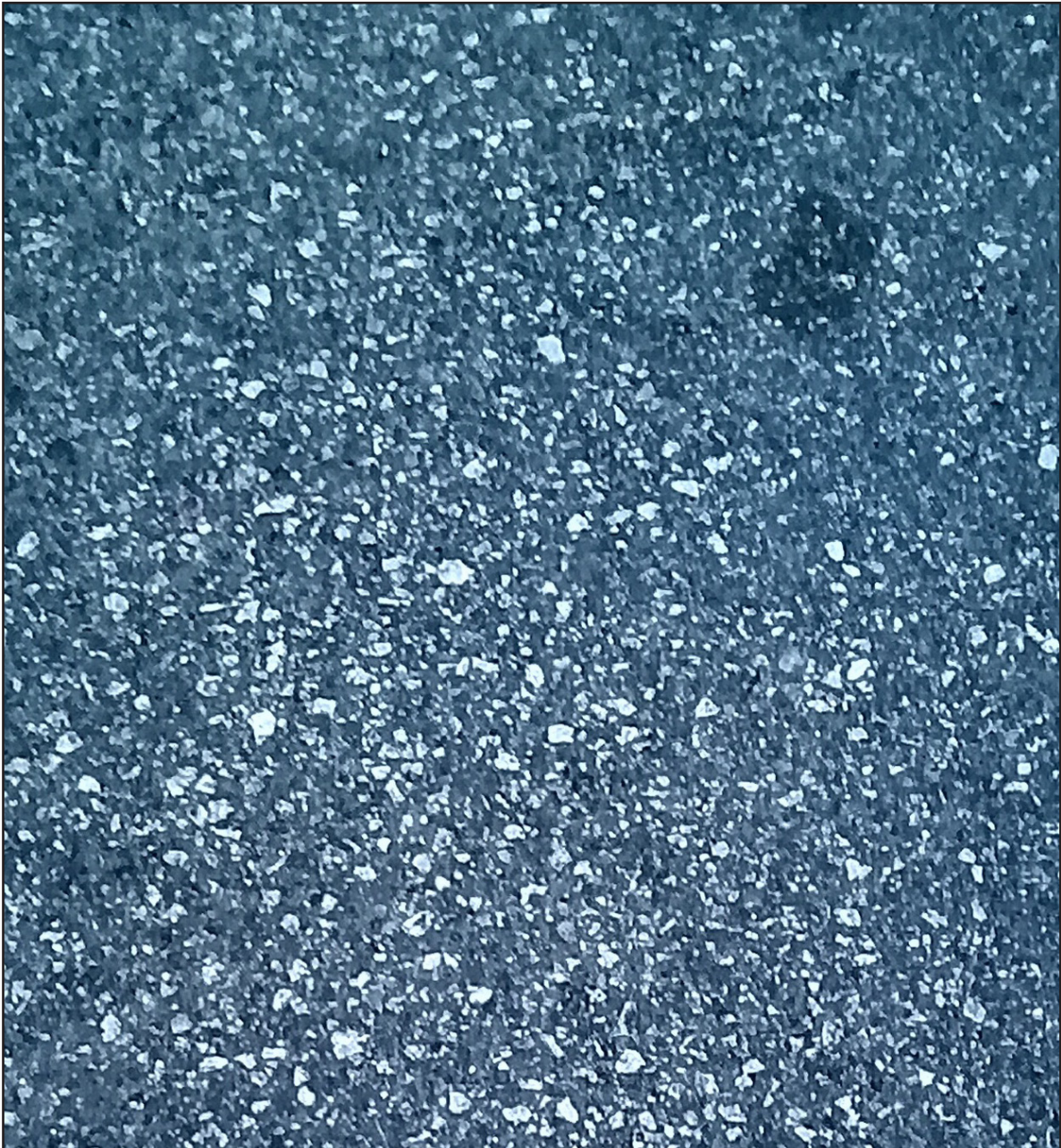


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TURN PIKE



DEVIATIONS | CHANGES | SHIFTS

THE BEDS WE'VE SLEPT IN, *Lauren Harkawik*

1.

There's a twin bed shoved in the corner of his dorm room, which is so small that I'd believe it used to be a closet. We lay there most nights. It starts as kissing, but it escalates with the eventuality of young love. Most nights, we lay with our faces close together, learning each other and unable to pull ourselves away. On weekends, we stay in bed late into the morning, 'til the sun is warm and my headache begs for coffee.

2.

Between two years of college, we move across the country to try adulthood on for size, interning at Big Important Places in Hollywood. In our little sublet in Koreatown, we sleep in a queen-sized bed together for the first time. It's too early in history for iPhones and we don't have cable or computers, so at night, we just lay in the dark. Sometimes I wake up jittering from bad dreams and he holds me tight until I stop shaking. One morning, the fire alarm above the bed starts beeping. There's no smoke, so I lay there under cool sheets while he, thin and boyish and wearing only boxers, teeters as he tries to get it to stop beeping. It's the first time I see him fiddle with something he's unsure of how to fix.

3.

My final dorm room is a nice single bedroom in an on-campus apartment that I share with our mutual friends. When we're in the common area, we're equal members of a five-part group. At bedtime, we close my door behind us and it's just the two of us in our own world. Some nights, we have quiet sex on the carpeted floor so our friends don't hear us. Other nights, we sit on the bed and fight in stage whispers so our friends don't hear us. Both of these things happen a lot. Some day, it'll all feel like it was our souls trying to work out wrinkles created during their fusion. At the time, the sex feels electrifying and the fights echo like dripping water on the walls of a cave, their sound bigger than reality and bigger than us.

4.

When we move to Brooklyn, I insist on a mattress on the floor, because I think it's cooler and more bohemian than a real bed. He obliges. On the weekends, we sleep late, and then we lay around until we go out to soak in the energy and life of the city. We're experimenting with our post-school selves – working, exploring, cooking,

THE BEDS WE'VE SLEPT IN, *continued*

drinking. On Valentine's Day, we make brunch and a pitcher of mimosas, and we get sleepy drunk in the middle of the day. We have sex with the overhead lights on, and we fall asleep on the bed before it's even over. At some point I open my eyes to find that I'm naked, thirsty, and deliciously tired. I've never been comfortable naked outside of showers or sex, except for that day, when as my fingers coast across my torso and onto his, I feel so bottomlessly safe that my eyelids droop and I dip back into a sleep that's as rich as a dense chocolate cake. We sleep there forever.

5.

Our bed from Brooklyn doesn't make it to Vermont, where we've rented a house in pursuit of fresher air and more creative freedom. Our wild abandon of the city is invigorating and we're both blossoming as people and creatives. We sleep in a queen bed that came with the house and we happily fall into patterns – of sleep, of sex, of waking. At some point my oldest friend gets engaged, and I start to cry quietly at night, envying what she has and worrying he'll never want to marry me despite our now very settled cohabitation. What time will see as a blink later, we're engaged. The same pillow that caught my tears holds my dreams right before our wedding and right after.

6.

In the house we buy, two old double beds are delivered from my mom's house. We pick the soft memory foam one for ourselves and shrug at the springy one. It gets set up in our guest room.

We're in the house six months when, one morning, we decide it's time to start trying for a baby. Ten years in, we have truly unprotected sex for the first time, without birth control pills, or condoms, or worry.

Our bed becomes full, first with possibility, then with the dull silence of what isn't happening. Sex for conception bobs between a passionate, incredible connection to a shared future and a frustrated desperation that it isn't working. I'm no good with discouragement and I'm even worse with being told what to do and when. As a year passes, I roll my eyes at the app on my phone that tells me when I'm ovulating, and I resent myself as I inch toward him on what I've decided is too prescribed a schedule.

7.

Eventually, it happens.

THE BEDS WE'VE SLEPT IN, *continued*

8.

Late in my pregnancy, my body is too heavy for the memory foam. He moves it downstairs and then struggles back up the stairs with the spring mattress. It holds me better enough that I forget about my sciatica while I'm laying awake from dry skin, a full bladder, and a human doing somersaults inside of me.

One night I doze off while we're watching Law and Order SVU. His turning it off wakes me up. I lay in the dark until, right after I hear his breathing change from awake to asleep, I feel a gush of liquid between my legs. It's warm and syrupy and shocking. Our room transforms; I've never been in such a dark or quiet space before. For two or three long seconds, everything freezes and I'm the only one that knows the world is about to change. Then my voice cracks the air, and the stars are set into motion.

9.

In the hospital, they push two beds together so he can sleep by my side, our baby in a tiny plastic bassinet a couple of feet away. On the second night, the nurses take her to the nursery so we can rest. Tides of postpartum hormones crash and churn inside of me, and I start to feel guilty and upset that she's not with us. I try to shake him awake to tell him I need him, but he's so tired he won't rouse. Finally, they bring her back. She can't nurse and won't rest. She cries and cries until finally, I take her tiny body and put inside my wide-necked sweatshirt with me, her little head peeking out of the neck hole below my chin. Her skin settles on mine and she quiets. Nearby, his steady, deep breaths are unaware. I want to shake him awake and draw him into this earth shattering moment in my life as our daughter's mother, but I don't.

10.

We sleep with a nightlight on for the six months that our room has three occupants. The baby sleeps in long spurts. I can't breastfeed naturally, so I pump milk throughout the night. He wakes to feed the baby, because my milk schedule and the baby's feeding schedule are not in sync. Night becomes a time when I wake frequently, trying to keep quiet enough that they can sleep. When he rouses with her, I keep my eyes closed, hoping to rest before my next scheduled pump. I'm on an island, but I'm never alone.

11.

When we move her into her own room, our baby goes through a regression. When

THE BEDS WE'VE SLEPT IN, *continued*

through a monitor her cries break through the dark air of our room, I crawl out of our bed and into her room, where in the warm glow of a nightlight, I try to get her back to sleep. More than once, he comes in to sit with her instead, relieving me of the feeling of failure her cries inspire, but breeding new ones as I lay in our bed alone, listening to the quiet he's able to orchestrate. For what feels like months but may have just been days, we go on like this. Sleeping together, then in shifts.

12.

Things settle down. Our bed is now the memory foam one that couldn't hold my pregnant body, and our room the one we used to call the guest room, because it's closest to our daughter's room. We lay in it, most nights, tired and waiting for early mornings. We make a deal. We each get up with our daughter every other day. On our off days, we sleep. Alone, but it's restorative. Some nights, we still find each other. When I hear another mom say she and her husband have not had sex since the birth of their child over a year ago, I'm grateful to find myself surprised.

13.

He's away on the night that my oldest friend gives birth to her daughter. I lay awake for most of the night clutching my phone, waiting to hear news of a happy birth. Around 3 am, a picture comes. It's her and her brand new girl, together for the first time. My eyes brim with tears and I hug the darkness around me, and then I rest my phone down, thinking that now that the world is right, I can get some rest. But I stare at the dark and I can't get warm, or comfortable, or tired. I try to focus on the sound of our daughter's white noise machine streaming through the baby monitor that sits next to my bed, or on the warmth of the dog laying at my feet. But it's been a long time since I've slept in our room alone, and the empty has me flustered. The next night, as I shove him to discourage snoring, I remind myself to be grateful to be in the warm womb of our bed, where the white noise is heartbeats and warmth is the sound of his breath when he's just gone from sleep to awake.

14.

Sometimes at the farmers market, I see older women with long gray hair who wear earthy stones for jewelry and have the natural blush of a happy life on their cheeks. They're sturdy and content, and I think, *I hope I am you, someday.*

THE BEDS WE'VE SLEPT IN, *continued*

Sometimes next to them, I see men with gray hair and gray beards who look more awake and more inspired and more alive than anyone decades their junior. I wonder if they've just discovered something amazing. A scientific breakthrough, or a code cracked. Or maybe they've just boiled some bit of sunshine down into one magical line of poetry.

These people, I dream, spend hours cooking beautiful deep sauces and sharing quiet by fireplaces that burn wood filled with decades of their secrets, warming them, keeping them alive. At the end of long days, they crawl into their bed and let the sound of each other's breathing lull them out to sea, the bobbing tranquility of its beautiful tide. Drawn in and out by the moon, sturdy, ever-present, and bright.

And I hope to be them, someday.

MORE INFORMATION ON TURNPIKE

What is Turnpike?

Turnpike is a literary and art magazine that focuses on fulfilling themes and underrepresented voices.

What does Turnpike do?

Turnpike focuses on the changes and shifts that confuse and bewilder us; moments of decisive passion, breaths of fresh air, and all the tiny and gigantic things that facilitate our growth find their place here.

We publish new issues every other month, featuring visual art, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and anything else you've deemed worthy of sharing. Anything that's especially difficult to describe, explain, or contain in one genre is also more than welcome.

Why "Turnpike?"

We chose the name "Turnpike" to indicate a deviation, or turn from what is expected. So often in the creative community do we focus on one type of voice and one type of theme. In our personal experience with literary journals, we noticed a consistent focus on trauma and misfortune that, while important, can become kind of damper on mental health. Additionally, we noticed that other publications may not highlight LGBTQ+ folk, persons of color, and other marginalized identities.

Our turn from the norm is to provide content based on more positive themes and to provide a space for voices that may be underrepresented in other media. While other publications that explore aforementioned voices and themes are helpful and important, we strive to deviate, to be refreshing and vulnerable in a new way.

Let us know what you think of our latest issue!

– the turnpike team

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