

## LADY DAY AND PREZ

### EVA LYNCH-COMER

We lay on a blanket while the breeze stirs the grass around us. I turn my palms to the sun and exhale so deeply my chest touches my spine. He starts picking flowers and I do the same. I present him with my bundle,

“For you, Prez,” I say with a deep bow. “For you, Lady Day,” he replies. I go first and arrange the flowers into a crown in his afro. A blue perennial in the middle, the crown jewel, flanked by two white magnolias whose petals bloom as soon as they touch his hair. I spread dandelions evenly around his head. When I am done I lean back to admire my work.

Now it is my turn. I close my eyes when the flower stems prick my scalp. My shoulders slump in relief and my breaths do not need to dig as deep. Prez plants the baby’s breath in my afro and starts humming, Loving You. I join him with a lower harmony while he adds the lavender. He braids the lavender stems into small sections of my hair so they won’t fall off. He squeezes a few pieces so the fragrance will last long after we part. As our song winds down Prez adds one last touch—one large gardenia behind my left ear. Then uses the petals to wipe away the fresh tears that have slipped down my eyes.

He places both hands on either side of my face. I lean into his palms which are stained with sweet lavender and breathe. I breathe for so long my breaths become light and airy, like a breeze sending dandelion seeds to new homes. So long, the sun tucks her rays into the blanket of the night sky.

And even then he holds me, his hands never shaking from fatigue. Only when I raise my head does he let his arms fall. I take his hands into mine and brush my lips along his palms, kiss the heels of his hands, his wrists, kiss each fingertip, then look up into his eyes, which are the dark brown of a rain-soaked tree. We exchange small soft smiles, then I stand, brush the grass from the back of my skirt, and gather my things, lightly touching his shoulders before I go.