

# ROOTED

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Like the coiling mass of dark hair that swirled *this way, that way, and the other* as it grew out of my head, winding until it would nestle down on the bit of my neck that is sensitive to the touch.

"Stop moving *this way, that way, and the other!*" my nana would cluck at me as I would squirm out of her grasp, resisting against her attempts to part, section, and braid my hair. "Tenderheaded!" she would say, shaking her head before shushing my crocodile tears.

My hair follicles were not unlike the moss that grows up the sides of trees, cloaking them in the green woolen dresses of lichens. The hairs simply did not want to be disturbed. Firmly tied to my scalp, the stubborn bunch refused to be pulled or pried.

Despite their protests, all of the hairs would eventually fall victim to a tugging comb, brush, or scratching finger, and fall out. The ones that did not fall to the floor were left abandoned in the teeth of combs or the forgotten pits of wastebaskets – dislodged and discarded.

The word "dislodged" is used to describe an object that has been removed from its lodging place –from its home, its roots. Its use suggests that there once existed an original place, a space from which something or someone could have first been removed.

Although "homes" are not always fixed and singular, we all desire the promise of comfort and stability of being "at home" and of being rooted in something or someone.

Aren't we all a bit tenderheaded, then? Sensitive to the sensation of separation, we anchor ourselves, latching on to anything that offers the possibility of grounding us and holding us tight. We close our eyes and plant our feet in the ground, pushing our heels down into the dirt.

We cannot be moved. We shall not be moved. But, when we are inevitably moved we squeeze our bodies tight and whisper, "There's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home."

Like all children of diaspora, I shuffle between various degrees of connection and estrangement to home, for I have many homes. My home in Jamaica is distant and unknown. There, I am nothing more than a stranger or a tourist at best. It is the place that is my ancestors' homeland, but I may never fully be at home there amongst family members who have yet to even meet me.

As I wriggle into the space between here and there, I accept the fate that comes of those who belong everywhere and nowhere in particular. And still, I journey on with the taste of being in-between on my lips.