

# When you hang the family out to dry by Kik Lodge

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There's a north wind. You shake out the grandfather – who doesn't know he's your grandfather – and he growls. The washer has faded him, or maybe shame has. You imagine the motions of his lips twenty years prior, when he tells his pregnant daughter – your mother – to *give birth and give it up!*

You are "it".

The grandmother – who doesn't know she's your grandmother – has clumps of detergent in her hair. Her crumpled fingers try to swat you. *Bad egg*, she says, and you pin her cuffs to the twine with coiled fulcrums.

You peg the dripping aunt – who doesn't know she's your aunt – on the end. The same end in the photo you have, where two sisters stand in Peter Pan collars.

You only got given a month with your mother when you found her address. Questions turned to tears collected in a bowl. Her answers – *too young, too trapped, too stupid*. One month later, pathosis.

'What are you going to come back as?' you asked her.

'The north wind.'

'Dare you', you said.

The family flap in front of you. Limbs twist and unravel, eyes sink, look away. Skin drips. Stiffens.

You think of the time you weren't with the grandparents in Yellow Cottage. When you didn't build a snowman with the cousins and get scolded for catching a cold. When your mother never hush-hushed you to sleep.

'Do you know who I am?' you ask, or maybe you bellow.