

## **Feminine Alignment**

Each night of my adolescence, I tucked myself into bed and listened to the squeak and shuffle of my waterproof mattress protector. In the morning, I would wake up with my pajama pants and sheets soaked in pee, a reminder that a plastic sheet was in fact necessary. Then I would lurch downstairs to the washer and dryer, unable to see over the giant bundle of soiled pajamas and sheets.

Enter Desmopressin. Thank you, modern science! I carried an orange prescription of pills to each sleepover and sleepaway camp; the capsules contained a hormone capable of turning off my bladder's incessant desire to empty into my REI sleeping bag. I would sit in the doctor's bright white office, 6 feet tall. A nurse would ask, "are you still taking the Desmopressin?" and I answer, "yes." She frowns. Mom's soft eyes follow mine, wanting to soothe me.

But no medication is infallible. At one 7th-grade sleepover, after we washed away our green face masks and drank our sprite, I peed in the bed my friend and I shared. I woke up early, leaving a moment to lie in the wet sheets and feel doom collapse over me. I appealed to any higher power, fairy godmother, or superhero who may provide an escape route. I bargained, promising never to masturbate or curse again should the sheets magically dry.

Yet, I remained in the silence before the humiliation, wallowing on a creaky futon in a basement full of sleeping thirteen-year-olds at dawn. It was Portland, Oregon. America, 2015. Pre-Covid 19 pandemic, pre-Donald Trump presidency, pre-menarche, and pre-a time when my body and mind could align harmoniously. For now, I would leak urine into beds and sleeping bags across time and space.

Having tried alarm-rigged underwear (a pair of unisex boxer briefs with wires along the gusset), I turned to the urologist's office. The doctor parted my skin to peer inwards and look for

deformities, novel pubic hair on display. Hopefully she doesn't mind the specimen as it is in nature. She worked quickly and confirmed that my bedwetting was mental. It came from my brain, not my muscles or skin.

Onto acupuncture. The room was dim and earthy, furnished with naturopathic trinkets, including a gray stone engraved with PEACE. I lay on a cot and listened to Chinese instrumental music while a woman stuck tiny needles in my ears, face, feet, and knees. I enjoyed the womb-like room; it was dark, and the acupuncturist would wrap me in a warm blanket. But alas, there was no change in my pajama pants.

Ultimately dry sheets arrived while I learned to drive, around 11th grade. Oh, to the Google searches, looking for a reasonable timeline for a change! I wanted something to look forward to, something to place a bet on. But nothing can create change in bodies but the passage of time.

Nowadays, I stand in the shower and let heat and foam run from my hair to my feet. In the hot wash cycle, the sheets get it too, with detergent sudsing the cotton and rinsing away. My blanket is quilted and simple, sewn once and washed over and over, like me. At night I'll sway in my most threadbare pajamas, listening to the most folksy Taylor Swift. I turn on layered sheets and a blanket, curled around my stomach with slack muscles and full breaths. I tell my college friends about my high school bedwetting. Their eyes meet mine wide, and they brace themselves against the couch as glee spills out. They laugh like a day that's not your birthday or celebrated at all, just good.