

Keeping a Home

When Martha Stewart demonstrates the only right way to fold a fitted sheet, I covet her confidence. The easy possession of truth. She pockets one corner in another, smooths the strata conclusively. I'm teaching my boys to fold clothes, Minecraft t-shirts and knee-thinned jeans—each attempt a wrinkled mess, as my mom would have said. She ironed most of what she wore. Liked how cotton so gladly unfurrowed under warmth. Liked talking with me while she passed the slick plate over fabric, her finished work stacked into appreciable piles. She'd offer me the board; I said the piles were just made to diminish. To be diminished, wear by wear. I wasn't wrong but oh, I was smug. Martha insists on a daily-made bed. Believes a taut coverlet and primmed pillows discourage proximate clutter—balled socks, scattered papers. My papers: always scattered. Loose lines on torn slips and leafed piles I want, wildly, to make appreciable. German-crafted journals fanned open like hands, every finger a middle one. This is the work that calls me. It's a clamor and demanding as my boys believe me to be when I demonstrate how one pant leg should square with the other, when I say this work has value, and are any of us convinced? *Your turn* I tell them, itching to take over. To dispense with the task myself, in silence. The trouble with a fitted sheet, its elasticized hem: it will always want to draw toward itself. Though Martha insists it can be conquered, pulling the parcel to her chest. The audience cheers.