

The Voice of Macrame Twine

You unearth the dusty boxes,
cough a little as you handle
empty bobbins,
paper wrappings,
cotton bales,
and photos with their
fading faces,
until finally, you find us.

Begin at last.
Interrogate our silence.

We are macrame twine,
assorted balls,
choose your thickness:
ten or five?

What have you unleashed?
Choose your shade: fudge or leaf
or best silk-stockings cream.

Hidden from the light,
we've kept our brightness
tightly wound,
waited in the dark,
for hidden truth to out.

We are unused macrame twine,
choose your weight: from ten to five,
surplus to requirements then,
we have a purpose yet.

We are macrame twine
in ten or five,
our voices thread
through Belper mills
where fibres hung
in cotton clatter clouds,
and lined the lungs
of coughing girls,
whose ribs were
rattling racks
of hunger bones,
with threads of spittle
strung like pearls.

By Janet Philo 2023



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