

Getting Away

by Tawnysha Greene

Daddy says he needs to go to the movies at night to relieve his stress, so Momma wakes us up, puts coats over our pajamas, leads us to the car where we go to the drive-in, lay the seats down, fall back asleep, but before we go, Momma kneels in front of us, whispers like she's telling us a secret, asks us for money and we give her the coins, the dollar bills we keep in our dresser drawer, the money we earn for washing the neighbor's cars, walking their dogs.

When the bills come in the mail, Momma puts them in her address book unopened and Daddy says he needs to go to the beach, that the waves will make him relax, so we get in the car again and on the way there, stop to buy sand toys, boogie boards, doughnuts for everyone. We carry our money with us now in new wallets Daddy bought us and on the way to the register, Momma turns to us, quiet, asks like she did before.

When the money we have is not enough, Momma and Daddy stay up late, make a big list of everyone we know, take turns going into their room, alone, ask money from grandparents, cousins, the church, say we need it to live. When the checks come in the mail, Momma and Daddy open the envelopes, add them up on Daddy's big calculator and at night, we all eat a steak dinner at Sizzlers, buy new shoes, dresses for church.

Daddy says we need to go on a ski trip in the mountains, that his mind needs to get away, and we pack the car, drive a day there. Momma takes us to the shop where we rent puffy jackets, snow pants, boots, and skis. Daddy meets us at the cash register, adds sunglasses, hats, gloves to the pile. We ski all day and again the next morning and Daddy takes us to the lodge at the top of the mountain where we drink hot cider, eat French fries, and Daddy takes a picture of us all around the table, says this is good.

When the money runs out, we come back home and the bills, now with red stamps across the front, go in Momma's address book, and Daddy gets mad, says he needs to de-stress. *We'll go to Disneyland,*

he says, *we've never been there, it will be good for us, good for my mind.*

So we sell the van and borrow my uncle's car. We spend three days at the park, ride the roller coasters, eat cotton candy, ice cream cones. On the way back, it rains and Daddy gets a ticket for going too fast and for the rest of the way home, Daddy breathes loud, one hand on the steering wheel, the other through his hair, says to Momma, *I need to get away. I need to get away.*

