

Refugio Beach

by Tawnysha Greene

We hide in the car trunk, so Daddy only has to pay the park ranger for him and Momma to get in. Under blankets, clothes, shoes, sister and me breathe sticky air, skin touching, as Daddy stops the car by the parking booth, but the ranger doesn't ask to look inside, allows us through.

We set up a blue tent under the trees, find sticks on the beach, build a fire. When the sun is gone, sister and me sit in the tent, while Momma, Daddy lay in the car, seats back, windows down. We make lanyards, but sister's are prettier, because she can get them to twist, something I can't do even when she shows me how.

It starts to rain and Momma and Daddy shut their doors, and sister and me lie down, make shadow puppets with our hands against the canvas of the tent, light from the street lamp flickering overhead. A train comes, whizzing by on tracks we didn't know were so close, and our puppets scream, our hands opening wide, shaking from side to side and we laugh, our hands falling down.

Momma tells us to be quiet, that the ranger will hear, and we pull the covers over us, hold the blanket up above our heads, so that it feels like we're in a cave. We can't see anything except for glimpses of the other's eyes, hands, mouths when we move. Sister falls asleep and when I get hot, I pull the covers off.

Her mouth is open, arms out above her head the way I sleep sometimes. Her hands, sleeves are wet and I see where water is coming in—a tear in the tent where we packed it last time, too quickly.

