

The End of the World

by Tawnysha Greene

For a month, we go to grocery stores at night, through the back door to get boxes for the move up north. While Momma wraps towels, clothes around dishes, sister and me play in a covered maze we make with boxes leftover. Dark inside, the cartons smell of smoke, trees.

Our things packed, the landlord comes, points to dents in walls, the dirty ceiling fan. Momma follows him and he kneels at the ripped carpet where she tried stapling it back to the floor and she says, *It was like that before*. He shakes his head, leaves, and Momma sits in the empty den and cries.

After Momma tells Daddy we didn't get the money, Daddy gets mad, tears through the house, punches dents deeper into walls, and Momma pulls us to the car, tells us to stay while she takes care of Daddy. We fall asleep, and when we wake up, we are driving north past the onion fields.

We drive until morning, beyond the Redwoods where Momma and Daddy share a bed, sister and me on the couch. Rain falls often, and the sky is grey, still. There are no thunderstorms like at home. Daddy goes to his new job, comes home mad. His internship pays no money.

We collect newspapers, circle jobs with big red pens. Momma takes us to the beach on these days, sits on sand dunes with her Bible, prays, her hand over her mouth, clenched in a fist. We play wilderness, that we are lost, must forage for shelter, food. We call this game the end of the world.

I find driftwood, long, smooth logs washed up on the beach, drag them to dunes still wet from the sea, stack them big enough to hold Momma, sister, me. The houses never have doors, roofs, but the walls are strong. When I'm done, I sit inside, look up at the sky where the clouds never seem to move.

