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Purgatory

Alyssa Moreno
Concordia University - Portland

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Purgatory

Alyssa Moreno

2nd place

It was the kind of home that everyone dreamed of getting but would immediately regret. We'd been living there four years previous to the twins being born. Each little flower cried the day they crossed over the threshold beneath the warped and worn doorframe. Their cries floated up to the vaulted ceilings and were absorbed into the wood.

Before their presence infected the gingerbread interior of our Victorian heaven, we were ravenous for each other.

We had no concept of time; we didn't even own a clock.

We woke with the pale color of downy sheets and egg whites.

We loved with the heat of a fresh pot of coffee and the sharpness of a new book.

We fought with the dull power of a first time hangover.

We slept under bleary stucco stars.

Once the twins arrived our fire lost its kindling. The thing we once ignored now ruled all of our days. We bought a clock and planned our days by the hour.

5am feeding, burping, and changing.

6am early morning nap.

7am adult feeding.

8am to 5pm was a blur of work and hourly checkups on the twins.

6pm feeding, burping, changing.

7pm adult feeding.

8pm off to bed on a good day.

Our days repeated on a loop of burnt toast, incessant cries, and dreary expressions. We had left our Victorian heaven and walked right into purgatory. While there, I slept under the diminished stars in a bed devoid of life. He had taken a liking to occupying the stairs at night. There he would sit, softly whistling, drifting in and out of consciousness. A ghost of the night, ensuring they slept soundly. He would peer through the dull shadows of the pansy nightlight and look in on their soft-pink faces. Watching the rise and fall of their protruding bellies. There on the stairs he would wait until dawn, when their tiny hands would open up like flower petals awaiting the first ray of sun.