

My Mother's Perfume

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As a child, when the smell of my mother's perfume wafted down the hallway, I knew she and my father would be going out soon. I grew older and the scent came only in waves, becoming fainter and fainter. The smell of stale books and dried tears now waft in, and I find myself wishing for a spiral staircase and a wrap-around porch. My eyes flicker from house to house as I walk the streets I grew up in, searching, but for what, I don't know.



Sand between my teeth, he kissed me. Milkyway above, dune grass below. My hand snuck down his back and his whole body shuddered. Sand slipped into places his tongue would soon find. The blanket, left behind, watched the stars while our eyes were closed, counting how many were shooting, and begging us to notice; to use the wishes we didn't know we would need.



I was raised with candles lighting my Friday nights and the smell of potatoes and hot oil the entire month of December. I was raised in tents in the middle of Wisconsin, swimming in a lake with black sand. I learned how to match Blundstones with dresses, though never how to french braid hair. But I know how to stargaze properly, and how to steal toasters after dark. I miss the house on top of the hill. It provided walls we thought would never fall.



I notice myself floating through the day dodging sticky notes and calendar reminders. I wake up from 5 a.m. nightmares when I wear socks or my retainer. I'm not afraid of the dark anymore because I met him under only the light of stars that we drunkenly tried to name and a moon that moved quickly toward the horizon.