

Eskimo Days

by Tawnysha Greene

When our cousins have garage sales, it's like Christmas, because we get huge trash bags full of shirts, overalls, shoes that didn't sell. Sometimes, we go to their house before they pack up their driveway, barter with the people who are left, buy a game of *Pictionary* without dice for ten cents, a pack of cards for five. The games we enjoy most, though, are the ones we make ourselves.

A ball of rubber bands tied to a string that sister spins around on the street while I jump over. An obstacle course made of couch cushions set up in the hallway that sister and I gallop through, pretending we are horses, running on all fours. We imagine that we are wolves, make a home with blankets and pillows beneath our beds, run from hunters, call one another wolf as if we don't have names.

Momma plays these games, too, sets up tents for us with blankets strewn over the dining room table. When the electricity, the heat is turned off, we pretend we're lost in the snow, that we are sled dogs who must help Momma find her way home, must lie next to her to keep her warm. We cook over the fireplace on these days, blacken marshmallows on straightened hangers, like Eskimos, dogs around a campfire.

Afterwards, I help Momma clean the refrigerator, open food that will go bad if the power doesn't come back on soon. One night, I cut my hand on a can left open, and she keeps the game going, takes me to the bathroom, holds a towel around my fingers, watches it and another soak through. Hours later, when the bleeding finally stops, Momma splints my fingers with popsicle sticks, duct tape, says this is how the doctors did it in the Eskimo days, how they did it back then.

