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## Bloodlines

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## BLOODLINES

MEGAN JESSOP

The mountain base cradles two houses, conjoined like fated twins. A hallway with two doors on either end separated them—pathways of veins where blood runs through, leading straight to the heart. At age four, we moved into this new home with new faces, as my cousins whom I had not yet met came for a visit—strangers settling in to barren living rooms. There have been muted voices since.

Aunt Charlene and Grandma's voices in the hallways, the voices of Daddy and Grandad in the next room, every voice was echoed by the sound of mother's knife, chopping carrots on countertops. The voices projecting muffled words, saying things like, "perhaps we will leave a place for a new mother," or, "someday your sister will share her husband." The words paint an abstract still, a portrait of betrayal, moving us to jealousy, moving us to embrace this bitterness.

We were made to blend into the background as the setting of this story, each touch of artistry attempting to soften how our mothers have been oppressed. We were raised in hushed whispers, whispers that taught us the ways in which our souls would seek salvation; three levels of hell we eternally belonged to—hell in its present form. We are never free.

Our women and children are personal forms of bloodletting. We've created a poultice for hiding their scars we've created while being scarred ourselves. There are rivers of offenses beginning from beyond my father's father's father. We hold within us a lust that makes us gods. We have cleansed ourselves, for our sins, with histories of a romanticized martyrdom. When did it become murder of the innocent when all this time it was war?