All Tucked In

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All Tucked In

When I was five, I always slept with the bedcovers pulled up tight against my chin. I prayed that vampires wouldn’t suck blood through the tasteless threads of a quilt and that the sharp-clawed monster waiting behind my bedroom door for “lights out” couldn’t snap through sheets that smelled of the perfume of my mother’s hands.

At fifteen, I pulled the cotton covers closer to hide myself from the nuclear holocaust that might mushroom under the moon, melting my eyes into the hollows of my skull like two pats of butter thrown on a hot skillet. The sheets would shield me from the firestorm, leaving me alive to brave a blizzard of quiet fallout.

Now, at twenty-three, the sheets still skirt my neck at night. I cannot explain why the soft fabric feels like armor during the witching hours; I simply understand, deep in my bones, that we call a bed’s blanket comforter because it wards off the jagged shapes that snarl in the dead of the fallen darkness.

—Trenton L. Hickman