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## All Tucked In

Trenton L. Hickman

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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