

Family Room

I tuck my feet under her body
as we sit silent together—
her glossy National Geographic,
my yellowing mystery novel.
I cannot get close enough.
Listening to her breathing,
I try to align mine with hers,
but my little lungs take in less.

Jacob runs inside,
wearing sweatpants and a Snoopy shirt,
asking to open the mail in his hands.
Mom nods.

He joins our quiet,
cross-legged on the orange carpet,
carefully slitting open sealed envelopes
until Mom notices her handwritten checks
and all the wasted stamps.

She raises her voice
—"I'm not yelling,
just making a point"—
but my breathing speeds up anyway.

I take my book.
Run upstairs.
Shut the door.
Flip to the bookmark.
Disappear.

Lavonne Shetler

