

"Purge"

by Kristen Falso-Capaldi

The demolition is tomorrow. It's the last house standing. We've watched them fall one by one since the airport seized the land.

Today the two of us hold hands the way we did then. Best friends after all these years. She was the one who kept me from burning it down that time with him sleeping in it. Because I didn't care that he thought the war was still going on. That he drank to forget the sizzle of land mines and men disappearing like vapor through tall grass. I didn't care because it was his hands around my neck, not the enemy's. Never the enemy's. I wanted to watch it rise up like a pyre. I welcomed the consequences.

She stopped me then. My best friend.

Today, she reaches deep into her pocket and pulls out the matches. I lift the gas can. The house is empty, but it will never be empty.

"Time to purge," we say together.