

The Leg

by Shelagh Power-Chopra

They all looked for Vic's leg after the accident. His truck had skimmed a cedar tree, sliced the door right off with half of Vic's leg. Sheered it off just above the knee, a lovely clean cut as if a surgeon had sat alongside him in the car. The rescue men milled around, stiff coats and heavy tools knocking about, nodding and blinking at one another in the dusk light and then William came down and thought he'd have a look around, thought Vic would appreciate him looking for the leg but he was concerned now as he flicked about bits of red steel and broken glass with his foot, worried that him seeing Laura would most likely stop now as Vic was limbless and surely she would go back to him—a cripple now, it always worked that way and she would nurse him back and certain tender moments would arise out of pity and whatnot.

There would be hot soup brought on trays, afternoons watching mechanic shows on TV and the meeting in the woods near her house would end, slippery dips in the bucket seat of her car and that weekend in Jersey; the musty room, plastic chips sweating in their hands and she wasn't a very pretty woman, lipstick always sloppy, blouses dull and thin but she had a mousy glow—a freckled superiority he liked to think and they chatted about evolution and steamboats and she really could chat, really get the fire going. But lately he really wondered about it all and he seemed wise on indecision and what form he should really take, her eyes wandered lately and a certain rage seemed to swim between them and sometimes he wondered if he was stupid, really did she think him stupid, his views not warranted? She laughed at him and his inability, his inability to coax certain charms from her.

He stumbled down the ravine and kicked stones and twigs and fell hard against a boulder—a sudden, sharp pain hit his shoulder but he picked himself up, heavy bones and body, fat that Laura pawed and

patted. His foot knocked something thick and pliant—the leg. A stocky, pale calf covered in dark hair, the sneaker and sock still on, the wide, wine-colored birthmark near the knee that Laura hated so much. He pushed it down the ravine and watched it jerk wildly down the slope—the surface of the cut, a mottled red in the pale light, rushing against the thick weeds, collecting brush and rock.

