Izyum

by Agnes Ezra Arabella

The fire was so fierce,
so fair like an opal;
the most primal burn.
"Death haunts these trees,"
the woman said, as she held the pot
of beetroot soup above the fire.

They spoke from the basement;
living in the dark space,
nerves too locked up to
to look out the window
and watch the soldiers.

The girl leaned into the flames.
She watched them dance;
specks like illuminations.
She rumbled through her backpack.
"It has been months since
I have been to school and
now I can go back but it is different,"
the girl said,
"now we have safe rooms
and bomb shelters."
She held a bowl to pour the
beetroot soup into.

They spoke from the basement;
living in the dark space,
nerves too locked up to
to look out the window
and watch the soldiers.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/agnes-ezra-arabella/izyum»*
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The woman heated her hands
above the flames.
"Death haunts these trees,"
she said,
"modern day torture chambers
have been found along the countryside;
the horror, the horror."
It was not enough to want to die.

They spoke from the basement;
living in the dark space,
nerves too locked up to
to look out the window
and watch the soldiers.

The girl pulled out her chemistry book
from her backpack;
She put it up to the fire to see,
The flames danced like three witches,
she flipped to the periodic table,
"Gold," she said,
"I want to be gold,
I want to build knowledge
but know my life is at risk."

They spoke from the basement;
living in the dark space,
nerves too locked up to
to look out the window
and watch the soldiers.

The woman passed the girl
 warm tea-
that smelled of fruit
and honey compote.

She looked the girl in the eyes;
where the flames of the fire
still danced like ballerinas.
"More than 400 bodies have been found
in this woods.
Death haunts these trees,
We only heard they were destroying the forest,
They hunkered down in tanks,
The bombs started to fall that night. They
began to bury the bodies,"
the woman said.

They spoke from the basement;
living in the dark space,
nerves too locked up to
to look out the window
and watch the soldiers.

The girl put the chemistry book on the
floor and began to cry.
It was water against fire,
fire flickered in her eyes,
"It is a real genocide here,
if they don't help us now,
they will be next,"
the girl said.

The fire danced;
the most primal burn.