

# Burn

*by* Laurie Stone

Teddy didn't warn Sunny to wear boots on his motorcycle, and by the time they were back at his apartment, the wound was deep against bone. He took her into the bathroom and lifted her foot onto his thigh. Curls fell across his eyes. He looked at the blistery ankle and said, "This is awful." Out popped an ironic laugh, as if the burn was an accomplishment. He swabbed on peroxide that frothed over the blood. Sunny could feel the muscles in his leg.

He served her sandwiches on his leather couch with metal studs along the edges, like a dentist's couch, ugly and hard. He could have made his place nice. Her ankle throbbed. He sat cross-legged, a body length apart. A few times Sunny had stayed in bed with Teddy, knowing a person was waiting in a café.

Teddy set his plate on the table and tugged down Sunny's pants, forgetting the burn. She cried out. He smiled softly and said, "This is the scar you'll remember me by." She kicked away his hand, wondering when she had made up a life for them.

That night she left Teddy's place and walked. She walked past sleeping buildings and the noodle joint where cabbies hung out. Jasmin scented the air. She saw herself on a train in China. She walked until the sky turned rosy. She walked so many miles that summer, it was as if she could walk him off her.

He tended her ankle until the wound healed into an angry ridge. Before the redness faded, he became involved with another woman. In time the scar disappeared but not the smell of him.

