

*Twitter What? Twitter Who?* / A. Grifa Ismaili (winner)

*Rich with imagery and anaphora, taut with poetic compression, this vignette vividly captures a fraught sociological moment without leading the reader too much by the hand. — John F. Buckley*

During the summer of Ramadan and *Icees*, our eyes, dry and itchy, willed the seconds to hurry by. The temperature on the Walgreens sign ticked higher and higher, but the seconds took their time. The solstice had been dead a week, and we spent those long hours of 2014 jonesing for cigarettes, trying not to say cuss words in front of the kids—not before breaking the fast when the sun dipped below the Mississippi and the petroleum skylines bloomed like hibiscus flowers.

We tried to lead by example. Like the old lady with the wild hair across the street, her grouchy pit bull musing up the concrete, her sun-faded Obama posters curling off the front door. She'd mow her lawn in her white church dress at strategic times during the day, all to avoid the heat. Gospel music gushed through her window screens. We didn't know what she was jonesing for, but we imagined it was peace and reprieve and probably a lawn service.

She tried to lead by example just like the ladies running the no-name halfway home down the street. A steady stream of visitors dropped off the aged, the unmanageable, the touched, the untouched and weary. The ladies, the aides, were jonesing for more funding, jonesing for a damn volunteer, just to sit some time on the porch in that rare moment a breeze gathers some gumption.

They tried to lead by example just like the shirtless men playing basketball in the BREC Park with the kitty litter sandbox and the scalding hot aluminum sliding board. They sunk hoop after hoop, jonesing for someone to see them, to recognize them as the somebodies they hoped to be. Raising their heads, they would nod at us as we stomped through the weeds to buy *Icees* for the kids, passing the damn time till we could break the fast.

We tried to lead by example. That summer of I Can't Breathe, of Hands Up Don't Shoot,

when the Twitter feeds and the Buzz-feeds blew up and exposed our corroded American sins, the hatred spewed toxic soup held too long in a cankerous belly.

And no, we will not get along. No, we will not.

Some of them shouted to us. Some of them shouted at us.

Never sure who was the real threat. The real ISIS—a goddess of magic, of healing, of mothers—chop your damn head off, man.

That summer we wore our USA t-shirts made in Dhaka. We rooted for Tim Howard in the World Cup between the day and night shifts.

We planted begonias and tomatoes in discarded truck tires. We mowed the damn lawn. Watched the little kids squirt their meemaws, cold water rushing through garden hoses, and not a drop to drink before sundown. Said prayers. Read Qur'an. Listened to Gospel cascade all the colors of the rainbow through open summer windows because the damn AC was coughing up Freon again. Played sweaty basketball. Said sweaty prayers. And bought icees for the kids, the unmanageable, the players. Lips and cheeks and faces—blue raspberry, sour apple, sweet cherry. We counted. We waited. We witnessed under the relentless Acadian sun.

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A. Grifa Ismaili's work has appeared in *Baltimore Review*, *Fiction International*, *Literary Orphans*, and *Press 53's Everywhere Stories*, among others. She has been a winner in the *Faulkner-Wisdom Competition*, a finalist in the *Nashville Film Festival*, and a nominee for a *Pushcart Prize*. Currently, she resides in the great boot of Louisiana with her very patient family.