

How to Dodge Bullets

By Rebecca Good

'If someone is shooting at you,' Grandpa says, "the first thing you should do, is to always run zig-zag.' I nod my head and go back to drinking my grapefruit juice out of a silly-straw. Grandpa goes back to making espresso, and puts in two cubes of sugar for me, so I can't taste the bitterness. But he likes it black. He likes to taste the sharpness because it reminds him of the way the sticks felt as they stung against his legs. The only legs that could still move from out of that pile. The only legs that knew how to get away. I watch as grandpa opens the sliding glass door so that Tanya, the cat, can come in. The air is thick and warm and smells like Kumquats from the trees around the yard, and of the kind of sour that you feel in the space between your teeth and the inside of your lips, the kind that's tart and chalky, like a grapefruit rind. Grandpa sits and drinks his shot in one sip. A quick, hot tingle, like the way it would have felt, should have felt, the way it felt when it hit the others. But it missed him. I slowly slurp mine as the filminess of the coffee coats my mouth. I can't taste the acidic flavor like grandpa does, like a stain in the back of the mouth, like if you're going to cry. But he doesn't, instead he just smiles and calls me 'ketsele' and laughs his immigrant laugh. And he sits in his chair and stares down at the bottom of the coffee cup, and thinks about how the grounds look like gun-powder. Grandpa, whom I've only seen cry once, when he talked about a movie he saw in a museum, a movie in which they killed all the children and the parents screamed in horror as their hopes died with their babies. Grandpa, who gives money to street musicians who play violin. Who never forgave his mother for going down to the police station so his brother wouldn't have to die alone. Grandpa, who doesn't understand why it's not right to call it a belt-seat, ran zig-zag, and that's why I'm here.