

to come. We need you to help us save this life. There were some boys around who didn't understand. Poachers. Robbers."

"What happened to them?"

"One of them found himself dead. The second lost a leg. But the third saw the light."

I pulled out a jaguar fang that an old man had sold me on Don Gustavo's boat dock.

"It's good," said the Jefe de Policia Ecologica. "It's a pig tusk he carved. Otherwise . . ." He smiled warmly. "You know what I'd have to do." 🐾

Luis Alberto Urrea's new short story collection, The Water Museum, is just out from Little, Brown.

Fireside

REBECCA WORBY

IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT, I'm standing by a fire, and the air is scented with smoke and pine. About a dozen people mill around or sit on chopped-up logs, sipping icy cans of beer pulled from a cooler. No one has a guitar, but two women begin a singalong, leaning into each other to read folk lyrics off a smart phone screen. Crouching over a log chunk already half-covered with names, one man—an artist who has designed iPhone apps and fonts—works intently with a small knife, humbled by the difficulty of carving his initials.

All this would be ordinary on a summer evening in the woods somewhere. But we are in Soho, in the middle of New York City, inside Recess, an artist residency and exhibition space. Jessica Segall, the artist responsible for *½ a cord*, the installation we are here to see, has constructed a temporary fireplace. With its white walls and concrete floor, Recess is designed for

transformation. The space has, at other times, become such things as a record store that only buys The Beatles' *White Album* and a sad bar complete with a house band. The effect of the fire, surrounded by a very small forest of discarded Christmas trees the artist hauled in from the street, is particularly bewildering.

The installation is simple: the smell, the heat, the comfort with which we stare into the flames for long moments instead of speaking—it's just like every campfire I've ever warmed my hands over. But the execution is complicated: this is Manhattan, and the planning and permitting needed to carry out the artist's chosen task—to install a freestanding fireplace and keep a fire burning in it for two weeks—took more than half a year. The hotel next door is less than pleased by the chimney coming through the outside wall, technically extending a few inches onto its property, a small affront to the city's tight grid and relentlessly minute delineation of space.

Gazing into the flames, I find myself forgetting that this is an art installation. The space feels timeless and placeless, and it's hard to imagine that in a few more days the fire will be gone, the chimney will no longer encroach onto the hotel's property, and the hole in the wall will be patched. The space will return to blankness and then be claimed by the next artist's creation.

For now, though, strangers wander in, ask questions, and stand near the glow, drawn by the smell of wood smoke that has overtaken the neighborhood. Their faces register puzzlement and joy. Some walk out, but some stay a while, enjoying the respite from Soho's endless parade of crowds, before shuffling back out into the night. 🐾

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Earth Under Glass

JOEANN HART

OUTSIDE the Biosphere 2 compound in Oracle, Arizona, where I wait in the sun for the guide and watch moist vegetation press against the inside of the glass, the words that come to mind are "overgrown terrarium"—an enormous one, three football fields long, with humans instead of newts. In the ninety-one-foot-high man-made rainforest, residents once tried to grow figs, guavas, limes, bananas, and a smattering of coffee, enough for one cup

