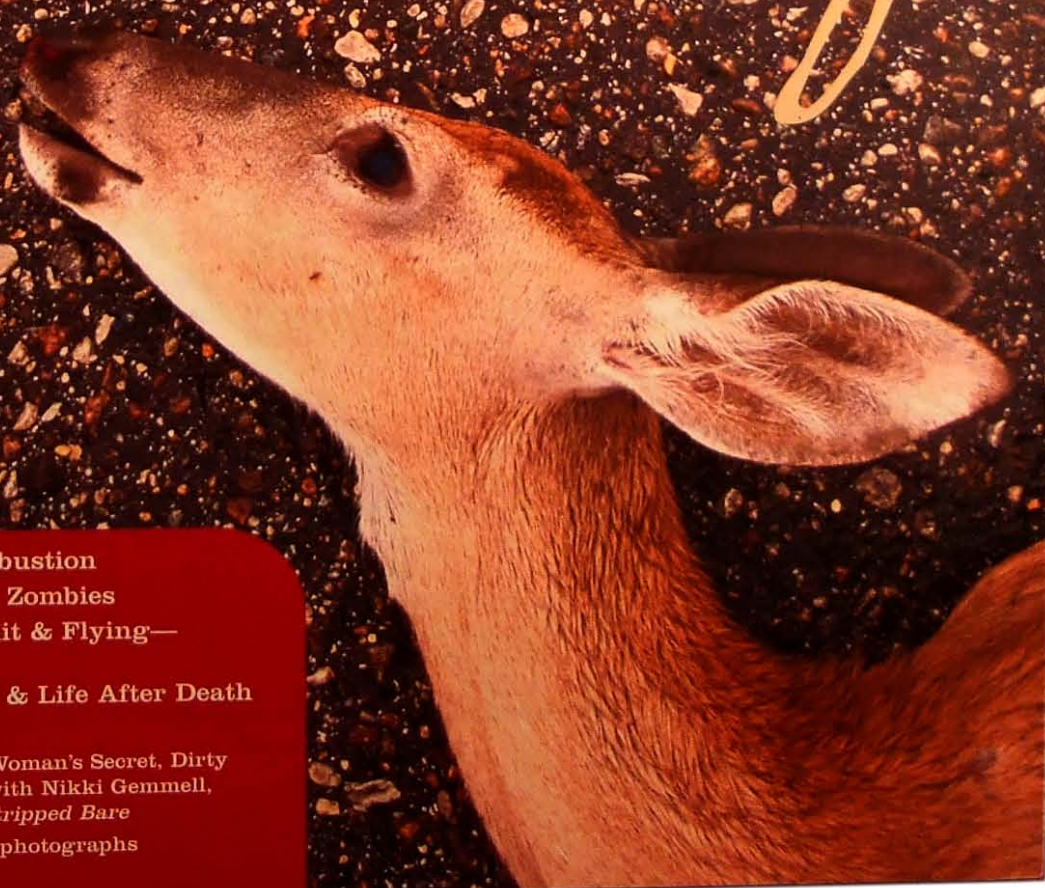


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STRONG WORDS FOR A POLITE NATION

Dead Things



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Conditions of Combustion
Dinner Party with Zombies
Leather Death Fruit & Flying—
A Consideration
Lethargy, Leptons & Life After Death

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Dinner Party with Zombies

MICHELLE WINEGAR

ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN KLASSEN

The walking dead aren't great with polite dinner conversation. Their listening skills aren't so hot either. After dessert I try to get rid of them so we can enjoy what's left of the night, but they don't take the hint so I light a firecracker and place it in the female zombie's mouth. She just wets the wick with her long white tongue and sits there, not saying a thing so I turn her upside down, shake all the water out, then light another one and pop it in. She explodes—waxy pulp all over the white tablecloth and silverware. My mood lifts.

I clarify the situation for the two remaining zombies: "Now we know how to kill you," I say.

They look at each other in their dirty overalls and plaid shirts. One says to the other in his backwoods Montana accent, "Joe, what do you say to be the best way to kill one of them there?"

Joe stands up. He's holding a bathtub-sized strainer above his head. It's filled with glowing hot coals and he dumps them on my three living dinner guests. They scream and jump up, try to wipe the sticky coals off their skin, hair, and clothes.

I look down at the table thinking it's probably time to call it a night and notice that pieces of the firecracker zombie have started to come back together again. ■