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Wires that, Usually, We Never Notice

Abstract
Richard stopped our car partway up our drive and did he ever have a puzzled look:
why's my wife just standing there, exiled and outside? I pointed in reply to the wires running overhead, wires that, usually, we never notice, and motioned to their juncture with our house where a little fire had started.

Keywords
fire, Fourth of July, wires
Wires that, Usually, We Never Notice

by Julie Hanson

Richard stopped our car partway up our drive and did he ever have a puzzled look:

*why's my wife just standing there, exiled and outside?* I pointed in reply to the wires running overhead, wires that, usually, we never notice, and motioned to their juncture with our house where a little fire had started.

Just one flame, really, dancing in place on a wire and making no headway whatsoever. Nevertheless, the operator at 911 had ordered me to "get outside" and all this had transpired in the flicker of time it takes to travel four blocks east, buy an o-ring for a hose and travel four blocks back.

Richard waited with me there a moment more while first the siren and then the firemen arrived.
The three of them stood around in their boots and padded coats, refusing offers of lemonade on a hot and otherwise quiet Fourth of July. They’d already phoned Alliant, who’d sent a man who’d be there any minute.

I told them how I’d heard the POP and come outside. Our neighbor, Stan, told everyone he’d seen a spark or something near the ground out of the corner of his eye. Shirley, who must be seventy if she’s a day, came along from three doors down and was startled by a fireman who yelled at her for running underneath the wires. Someone pointed out to everyone that two lights were on inside. That’s peculiar, we’d all thought. Not only that: the oven, air conditioner, and washer which had been on, were off.

So Richard carried the two chickens still in the roasting pan down to Bruce and Nancy’s house where we’d planned to eat them anyway in a matter of hours.

For nearly twenty years it’s been either their house or Richard’s and mine every Fourth of July. We start around six, we eat, we catch up on each others’ lives. We play a board game or croquet, and, even in election years, Nancy bakes a flag cake.

Julie Hanson has work in recent or forthcoming issues of Cincinnati Review, Volt, Poetry East, The Iowa Review, and Tampa Review. Her awards include the Robert and Adele Schiff poetry prize and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is coordinator of a food buying cooperative in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.