

Ashes

by [Paul Martin](#) in the [March 1, 2017](#) issue

The palms we raised in celebration
burned to ashes,
moistened with oil.
Death's greasy stain on our foreheads,
not easy to brush off.

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When my barber combs the hair
off my forehead, she stiffens,
and talk about the bright day strains
to recover the easy way between us.

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Without the body to kneel before,
to cry over and touch,
we feel awkward—
rows of chairs facing
a polished urn on a pedestal.

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Before I start the new fire, I shovel
out the cold ashes and scatter them
over the vegetable garden, a white dust
the wind drives back
into my eyes and mouth.