

Tekoa Smith

### **A Home Away**

SPLASH. A hard smack falls two feet from my flat body. I'm startled and unable to focus my eyes. I've been napping on my belly. SPLASH. A second, louder, smack followed by a familiar screech. Hands and knees scramble to feet as I hear "What the--?", followed by another smack and a splash on my forearms. I let out a screech. Water balloons are falling from the sky onto our roof; our outside living room. Now aware of what's going on we see a truck of laughing guys roll down the street. We, my roommates and I, can't help but laugh too. The sky begins to dim as the sun dips behind the Appalachian's. The cool breeze of late fall sweeps over my freshly sun bathed skin. That's how we know it is time to begin the weekend. I look on and I see others rising from their roofs and many of them I recognize. I recognize them by the music

being played, the hat they always wear, the guitar they play, and what they drink. I've been on their roofs, in their houses and sometimes in their beds. We share a school, a street and a lifestyle in Frostburg.

Frostburg Maryland is a comforting historic community. A strong, early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick church stands next to charming shops and restaurants on Main Street. This two lane road has three stop lights and no idea of rush hour traffic. Along with Frostburg's wonderful scenery and mind boosting history it is the home of Frostburg State University. Although small in size, Frostburg is big on hospitality. The Main Street Block party allowed us students to connect with our new home. At the start of every year anywhere in town you could hear the music, vintage car cruisers and patron chatter coming from Main Street. Complete with face painting, raffles and give-a-ways, a parade and plenty of food, the Block Party

was just the type of event to push a newly homesick student right into the memories of comfort and family.

With that familiar feeling still set we go into town, between Main Street and campus, where students own the streets. A grid of block after block of thirty year old houses stocked with twenty year old appliances, if any at all. These homes are a perfect habitat for nineteen and twenty year olds with no limitations and new responsibility. By the time I was beginning my senior year there wasn't a street in Frostburg I hadn't traveled. We all knew the grid better than we knew our school work.

Center Street: running along side the south of campus and your direct outlet to Main Street. Bowery Street: Center's parallel neighbor and your direct inlet. East College: crossing both former streets and stretching the length of east campus, the address for Hi-Way Pizza and Beer. Make a right before the

end of campus onto Beale and you're on your way to round Stoyer decending down the mountain until you've reached Mill. The quiet back border of Frostburg's student territory before climbing Hill, named for obvious reasons, passing again across E. College and continuing towards American, Grant, Warns and even Extended Bowery. From there you can cross to Bowery Street Pub and you've found yourself back on Center Street.

These streets and the houses on them were our playground. Every weekend, starting on Thursday night, students in packs, and sometimes solo, could be seen wandering the streets. We'd hop from one frat house to the next looking for a party most discrete, with the best door charge, the sweetest jungle juice or the hottest girls. We would bypass our classmates and run into the cute guy we seen in the cafeteria earlier that week. We would go to the same houses

year after year but be in a different party every time. Our comfort zone would grow every time we were back in a familiar space.

On a recent visit back to Frostburg my sorority sisters and I took to the grid for Friday entertainment. We started the night off at a friend's frat party. After catching up with old friends and sipping on a few warm keg beers Palumbo and I decide to venture out. Palumbo, in bare feet, spots a bonfire across E. College. We decide to introduce ourselves to the "neighbors" and join them. We're welcomed by others mesmerized by the dancing fire. We take a seat on a bench close to three guys. All are good looking at least by fire light. After surveying a host of students we find only one who actually lives in the house of the back yard we've made cozy. Everyone else was just like Palumbo and I, wanderers captured by the warmth.

From this bonfire our adventure only continues resulting in an invite, by the good-looking guys to a jam session with their band, a quick trip back to the frat party and ending with breakfast at a sister's house on Center Street at 3 AM. Palumbo never steps back into her shoes. "Why aren't you wearing any shoes?" I asked her. "Shoes?", Palumbo is shocked by the word. "I love it here. Frostburg is like a giant dorm. Who needs shoes?".

The feeling of home grows the longer you stay registered at FSU. With each year I attended I found myself staying more weekends and figuring out ways to stay during school breaks. Frostburg is home with less rules and more responsibility. A town and a school so close and minimal that any one would feel they belonged. An easy mesh of modernity in the middle of a classic setting.